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MEDITATIONS

AND

CONTEMPLATIONS,

BY THE

REVEREND JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

LATE RECTOR OF WESTON-FAVELL,

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE:

CONTAINING HIS

MEDITATIONS AMONG THE TOMBS,

REFLECTIONS ON A FLOWER-GARDEN,

&c. &c. &c.

TOGETHER WITH

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

IN TWO VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY S. J. SYLVESTER,

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MEMOIRS

OF

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE

REV. JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

WHENEVER we meet with an intellectual or superior character, we naturally feel a wish again to fall into his company, to listen to his conversation, to observe his manners, and to improve our acquaintance with him; yet this natural curiosity is seldom gratified to the extent of our wishes. The differences of ages, of places, and of ranks, must limit the acquaintance of man. Every situation has its duties to be performed. This rational curiosity, which personal intimacy cannot often gratify, biography may supply in a degree; and it is one of the most pleasing and useful labours of a biographer to trace the opening of genius, to pursue the progress of learning, to observe the formation of superior habits of piety and benevolence.

Perhaps few men were ever better known by their writings, or less known in the common circles of society than the Rev. James Hervey, the subject of these Memoirs. At all times he was studious and contemplative; generally he was sequestered in a country village; and often he was confined by sickness and great langour. He had no taste for the

amusements or the converse of the generality of the world. The particular events of his life were not diversified with much variety of circumstances; but the temper of the man, the course of his studies, the bent of his mind, and the benevolence of his heart, exhibit a most useful lesson, and may be partly discovered in his various works.

He was born February 14, 1714, at Hardingstone, a village near Northampton, where the family had resided some time. His father was rector of Weston-Favel and Collingtree, both in that neighbourhood. The Herveys were an ancient and opulent family in that county, formerly having large possessions at Hardingstone and at Weston: an ancestor of theirs had been a judge; and Mr. Hervey's great-grandfather represented the town of Northampton in parliament. Mr. J. Hervey had the peculiar advantage, which never can be too much valued, of being descended from a pious and respectable family.

He had two brothers and three sisters. His brothers settled in London, and deserved the characters of respectable tradesmen: one was a packer, whom he attended in his last illness; the other was a wine-merchant, who survived him many years. His mother superintended the first part of his education, and taught him to read. At seven years of age he was sent, with his brother, to the free grammar-school at Northampton, of which the Rev. Mr. Clark, vicar of St. Sepulchre's, in that town, was the master.

In the common routine of a school education, the marks of future genius may be entirely overlooked: or, most probably, they have no ways discovered themselves; like beautiful flowers which do not open till late in the spring or summer. Boys are more

like to each other than men. A lad may be thoughtless, or idle, who hereafter shall appear in a very different light. The superior mind may not be discovered, without impeaching the master's judgment, or imputing it to the mean motives of jealousy and envy.

With a common share of school learning, with but little knowledge of the world, and with general impressions of piety, young Mr. Hervey was entered at Lincoln College, Oxford. One of the joint tutors at that time was the Rev. Richard Hutchins, afterwards rector of that college; a man of abilities, integrity and piety, reserved in his manners, but who perplexed the refinements of a strong but not a brilliant mind with philosophical necessity, and called the attention of the public to the supposed fate of children dying in their infancy, from the good or the evil which God knew or foreknew they would have done, had they been permitted to live. A long life and a placid old age was the reward of his temperance and regularity.

For some time Mr Hervey, lived like the generality of the young men who came to college: released from the confinement and discipline of school, they are pleased with a liberty which they know not how to enjoy, and are intrusted with opportunities which they are not eager to improve. Without a direct object before it to engage and concentrate its powers the youthful mind wanders in the fields of fancy, or sinks in the slumbers of indolence: the example and the conversation of the generality of their superiors is not calculated to excite the spirit of emulation, to diffuse the charms of knowledge, or to advance the cause of genuine piety.

His other tutor was the Rev. J. Wesley. Few men have ever lived who have caused more conver-

sation, or excited more censure or applause: but now the subject is removed, and the mist of prejudice and the glare of partiality are gradually dying away. Whatever irregularities or eccentricities might at one time have marked the conduct or the writings of Mr. Wesley, yet it must be allowed that he possessed a strong understanding, acute reasoning powers, a clear and simple style, a ready elocution, lively conversation, combined with great activity of mind and remarkable strength of constitution. In love with a college life, it is no wonder that he attracted the notice and encouraged the literary pursuits of young Hervey: he frequently read and conversed with him out of the customary hours of lecture; he prescribed to him a plan of very early rising and of strict discipline, which would not agree with every constitution.

Without defending every sentiment which Mr. Wesley adopted, or vindicating every measure which he pursued, yet it must be allowed that few men ever collected together more knowledge or displayed more zeal.

With such a character it is no wonder that Mr. Hervey was much pleased; whose conversation was calculated to improve and enlarge his mind; whose time was carefully employed; whose temperance was exact, if not severe; and whose piety was uniform and exemplary.—A member of the college at that time has informed me, that often when he retired from the common room at four o'clock in the morning, Mr. Wesley and Mr. Hervey were up and studying together. To a young mind the contrast must have been great between the smoky atmosphere of a common room, and the quiet apartments of a tutor, which were marked by devotion, application temperance and health.

At college Mr. Hervey became particularly attached to Kiel's Anatomy, to Derham's Astro and Physico Theology, and to the Spectacle de la Nature. He acknowledged much obligation in the improvement of his style to Spence's Essay on Pope's Odyssey. By these means he laid that foundation for a general knowledge in the various and wonderful works of nature, which he afterwards was so successful to apply in displaying the greatness of the Author of nature, and in illustrating the wisdom of his sacred Word.

About this time he attempted to learn the Hebrew language, without any other help than the Westminster Grammar; but the unexpected difficulties discouraged him; and, for a time, he relinquished the attempt rather than the intention. Afterwards he became a proficient in that ancient, if not most ancient, language; that he might thus be better enabled to teach others, and to draw purer water from the wells of salvation.

The period of ordination, when a new and important character is assumed, was a season of much thought and reflection, of prayer and solemn resolutions, to fulfil the interesting obligations which he was entering into. Mr. Hervey was ordained the 19th of Septemper, 1736, by Dr. Potter, then bishop of Oxford; when he voluntarily relinquished an exhibition of 20*l.* per ann. which he received from college, thinking that it would be unjust to detain that necessary help to defray the academical expenses, which another might stand in greater need of.

At the first he assisted his father, but afterwards served the curacy of Dummer, in the county of Hampshire in which he continued about twelve months. He then paid a visit to a college accquaintance, Paul Orchard, Esq. of Stoke Abbey, in De-

vonshire, a gentleman of eminent worth and piety; to whose son he stood godfather, and for whose particular imitation he has drawn the character of his excellent parent. While on a visit with Mr. Orchard, he was induced, for the enjoyment of such society, at the request of the parishioners, who approved his preaching, and at the appointment of the aged and infirm rector, to undertake the curacy of Biddeford, in that county, at the yearly salary of 40*l*. As a mark of their affection and esteem, the congregation of themselves added 20*l*. per annum. Yet this with some small allowance from home, was often inadequate to the various claims on his benevolence; and although he was exceedingly temperate and frugal in all his expenses, yet he was often obliged to straiten himself to supply the more pressing wants of others.

In this pleasing retreat he faithfully and cheerfully discharged his parochial duties, preaching two or three times on a Sunday, and on the Wednesday and Friday expounding the Epistle and Gospel of that week: the remainder of his time was spent in enriching his mind, in improving his heart, and in partaking the pleasure of Christian and social conversation, which Mr. Hervey was well calculated to improve and to enjoy.

His character was now forming; and the impulse of indignant zeal was some times suppressed by the timidity or modesty of youth, when he was offended, if not directly insulted, by profane or obscene conversation in his presence. He entertained a most tender sense of the interest of religion, and a deep concern for men's spiritual welfare; therefore he was grieved and dejected whenever the hours of social intercourse were polluted by obscene mirth, or degraded by sarcastic ridicule on religion. When a

grand characteristic and excellency of man is abused to insult the modest ear, and to confuse the timid and unsuspicious female, such conduct can never be too severely condemned; but it demands the severest possible reprehension when proceeding from characters whose age, learning, and profession should be a protection to modesty, and might reasonably excite hopes of improvement. A wise man will prefer the completest solitude before society so degraded; a society from which he is glad to escape, although amidst the sneers of the scoffers; and he reproaches himself for more than time lost; he sinks in his own esteem. Mr. Hervey's character was soon so established for piety, and his conduct animated with such becoming zeal, that he was not again likely to be offended by meeting with such conversation.

Mr. Hervey cultivated friendship as the means of promoting religion. One of his choicest friends at Biddeford was Miss Jane Burnard, a pious and distinguished Christian, who died, in the flower of her age, of a lingering consumption. Mr. H. paid the last respect to her amiable and excellent character, by preaching her funeral sermon.

Whilst residing at this place he contracted the too seducing habit of sitting up late to pursue his beloved studies. Late hours at night must intrude on the morning; and the bright and fresh hours of the opening day are more favourable to health of body, and to the exertions of mind. Knowledge may be purchased at too high a price; and, surely, to endanger health, and to undermine a tender constitution, is to forget the great purpose of life, while indulging in a mental intemperance. This habit was afterwards corrected.

On the death of his rector in 1742, he left the curacy of Biddeford: and, on a final separation from

such a pastor, it is but natural to expect that the regret should be mutual, particularly when he delivered his farewell sermon. He was so much approved by the congregation, that they not only requested the rector to permit him to continue in the curacy, but they offered to pay the whole of his salary by voluntary contribution.

In this place he formed the plan of his Meditations. From Biddeford he removed to Weston-Favell, where he officiated as his father's curate.

In the year 1746 he attracted much general attention by the publications of his Meditations among the Tombs, Reflections on a Flower-Garden, and a Descant on Creation. The year following produced the second volume, containing Contemplations on the Night, and the Starry Heavens, and a Winter-Piece. A particular account can scarce be necessary of a work so generally read and admired. Mr. Hervey displays great and general knowledge, which he always usefully applies to enlarge the mind, to elevate the heart, and to promote the purest morality and devotion. In many of his writings he combines the descriptive powers of Thomson with the sublime reflections and moral energies of Young.

About the year 1750 he occasionally resided in London, at his brother's, to try the benefit of change of air, to be relieved from too sedentary a life, and to enjoy the converse of religious friends. Here he was attacked by a violent fever, and once escaped the calamity of fire, which destroyed the adjoining house.

On the death of his aged father, in May, 1752, he succeeded him at length in the two family livings of Weston-Favel and Collingtree, about five miles distance from one another, which did not produce above 160*l.* per annum together. He had some scruples

at the first on accepting the latter living; and it was some time before he took it: but every scruple of the most upright mind may not be reasonably formed, and ought not to be pertinaciously adhered to. The livings were near each other; and, if Mr. Hervey was compelled to keep a curate, which was more than probable, from his increasing infirmities and the precarious state of his health, one living would not have supplied his necessary expenses, on the most frugal plan. On this account he complied with the repeated wishes of his mother and friends; took his degree of Master of Arts at Cambridge, having been admitted of Clare-Hall, and was presented with the living of Collingtree. An apology to the bishop, on institution to the second living, seems to have been needless, only for doing what the law of the realm allows, and the inadequate provision of the church in general renders absolutely necessary. Mr. Hervey had no reason afterwards to blame himself for this line of conduct, but saw sufficient reason to approve the step which he had consented to take.

He next published his Remarks on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History, so far as they relate to the History of the Old Testament, and especially the Case of Noah denouncing a Curse upon Canaan, in a Letter to a Lady of Quality.

In 1753 he preached the sermon at the archdeacon's visitation at Northampton; and published it, for the benefit of a poor afflicted child, under the title of, The Cross of Christ the Christian's Glory.

In the same year he wrote a recommendatory Epistle to Burnham's Pious Memorials, or the Power of Religion on the Mind in Sickness and death,

exemplified in the experience of many eminent persons at those important seasons.

But his most favourite work, and on which he bestowed uncommon pains and attention, were the Dialogues, and the Letters of Theron and Aspasio, on most of the leading subjects of the Gospel, but particularly on the mode of salvation by the imputation of the righteousness of the Saviour. This subject Mr. Hervey labours to prove by argument, to support by authority, and to illustrate by various figures and modes. He displays great ingenuity, learning, and industry, much critical acumen, and a great extent of reading: and yet many wise and good men have doubted whether this is the exact method of salvation which the Gospel holds forth, without either attempting to diminish from the glory of the Saviour, or to ascribe any merit to the works of man.

Mr. Hervey abundantly succeeded in his plan of writing a popular book; on which account it abounds with varied descriptions. He ranges through the works of nature and the pages of history, to collect useful information, to charm the Juvenile reader, to lead him insensibly to high and heavenly things. His language, like his imagination, was rich and luxuriant; like a well cultivated garden in summer. It was profuse in flowers and fragrance.

This work met with great and deserved applause, and some opposition. Three editions were sold in the first year. It was attacked by Mr. John Wesley, his former tutor; by Mr. Robert Sandeman; and by Mr. Bellamy, of New England: but it was defended by Mr. Codworth and Mr. David Wilson. A rash and injudicious defence is worse than a violent attack; but the warmth of controversy soon

cools, the attention of the public is engaged with other subjects, and a debate, once highly interesting is soon forgotten.

The next year he enlarged on the commendation he had passed on Marshall's Gospel Mystery of Sanctification, which was published as a Preface to it.

The same year he also published a new edition of his favourite author, Jenck's Meditations, with a Preface, in which he strongly reccommends them.

This year he printed his three Sermons on the General Fast. As a preacher, Mr. Hervey was eloquent, energetic, and animated; his manner was striking, but never vulgar and low. He seemed to forget his feeble frame and his delicate constitution, while more immediately engaged in his Master's service, and labouring for the best interests of men.

Of Mr. Hervey's piety, devotion, zeal, charity, and knowledge, there will be but one opinion; yet it will not thence follow that every sentiment which he entertained was equally true and important. A distinction must always be made between the integrity of a man's life and the truth of his opinions: here we are more immediately and pleasingly concerned with the former.

His more particular friends were some of the first religious characters of the time; in which class are to be reckoned Lady Frances Shirley, the Rev. George Whitefield, Rev. William Romaine, Rev. Philip Doddridge, Rev. J. Ryland, and Dr. Stonhouse, his physician, who afterwards entered into holy orders, by his particular advice.

True piety is of no party; it can embrace and honour whatever excellencies it dicovers in others. On this principle Mr. Hervey entertained a high opinion, and cultivated a cordial friendship with

several who were not members of the national established church: if they did but acknowledge the divine Saviour, and walk in holiness of life, he was ever ready to honour them with his esteem, and to allow them the right hand of fellowship. Mr. Hervey himself was perfectly regular in his conduct as a member of the establishment.

He shone as a correspondent and as a companion. His letters and his conversation were remarkable for ease and elegance, for extent of knowledge and fervour of devotion. He always wished to be useful, and ever conducted himself as standing in the Divine presence, and employed in his Master's service. It is almost needless to say, that his converse was free from any thing which could tend to depreciate the character of another; he was as ready to conceal their faults, as to publish their excellencies.

His life was a practical comment on his writings: an example of what a christian ought to be; marked by the sincerest devotion to God, the most sacred regard to his holy word, and a conscientious attention to all his various duties as a pastor, a son, a brother, and a friend.

With strong natural powers, and much acquired learning, he was yet modest, humble, and diffident; lowly in his own eyes, and making much of those who feared the Lord. He was particularly solicitous for the spiritual improvement of the patients in the Northampton infirmary, and frequently visited them when his declining health would permit him.

In the cause of truth he was firm and zealous. He was justly offended at the treatment which his writings received, particularly from the critical reviewers; perhaps langour and pain might contribute their share, and render him more quickly irritable; and he warmly expressed the indignation

which he felt. He prepared to attack them with sarcasm and ridicule; but most probably he was handling weapons in which he could not excel, and might only have exposed himself and his writings to his unknown antagonists, who might have been more than equal to him in such a contest. Happily, the calm of reflection interposed, the earnest entreaties of his friends prevailed, and the design was relinquished.

Another work, of a different kind, in which he was engaged, was rebuilding the parsonage at Weston, of a neat and proper size, suitable to the living. The person he employed disappointed, if he did not deceive him; and it seemed as if he must have recourse to the disagreeable expedient of a law-suit, to settle the affair. But one builds and another inhabits: before Mr. Hervey occupied his new house, he was removed to his *house not made with hands.* The rebuilding the parsonage cost him four hundred pounds, besides the old materials. This sum he was enabled to supply by letting out some of his land for the cultivation of wood, which always produces an extraordinary rent for a time.

Mr. Hervey was both exceedingly liberal and judicious in the distribution of relief to the poor, the aged, and the sick; giving them clothes and proper food, rather than money; yet this was never withheld when the necessity of the case required it; as, to a prudent housekeeper, reduced by sickness or misfortune, to whom he would give several guineas at a time.

He often would procure the advice of physicians, and medicine from apothecaries, for the benefit of the sick poor: this was a favourite method with him of doing good; and often his kind attention to the sickness of the body prepared the way to relieve the

greater maladies of the soul. He also gave away great numbers of small religious books, but particularly Bibles.

Mr. Hervey was extremely temperate and frugal in his diet; plain in his dress, if not inattentive to his person. A suitable appearance has its use. The young, the thoughtless, and the stranger, may not know the real worth of the man; or reflect that he may easily become inattentive to dress, while the mind is intensely engaged in the pursuit of knowledge or the exercises of devotion, or while the body is languishing under infirmity and sickness.

Mr. Hervey for many years had struggled with much weakness and langour; was frequently confined by severe fits of sickness: but in the latter end of the year 1758, he grew worse. On the first Sunday in December, after family prayer in the evening, he was siezed so extremely ill, that his dissolution was apprehended to be very near: with great difficulty he was got up stairs, and after that never left his room. The cramp returned with violence. He was greivously afflicted with a hectic cough in the night, that obliged him to rise very early. He was sensible of his danger, yet was willing to use proper means to mitigate the pain, and to prolong life. On the 15th of December, he complained of a pain in his side, for which, at his own desire, he was blooded: but the surgeon, perceiving his weakness and danger, took but a small quantity of blood, Mr. Maddock, his curate, was much with him; to whom he pathetically spoke of his assurance of faith, and of the great love of God in Christ. "How much," says he, "has Christ done for me, and how little have I done for so loving a Saviour! If I preached even once a week, it was at last a burden to me. I have not visited the people

of my parish as I ought to have done, and thus have preached from house to house. I have not taken every opportunity of speaking for Christ."

These expressions were accompanied with tears. "But do not think," says he, "that I am afraid to die; I assure you I am not. I know what my Saviour hath done for me, and I want to be gone. But I wonder and lament to think of the love of Christ in doing so much for me, and how little I have done for him." And in another conversation, calmly speaking of his approaching dissolution, and our ignorance of the sacred word, he observed, "How many precious texts are there, big with the richest truths of Christ, which we cannot comprehend, of which we know nothing; and of those we do know how few do we remember! A good textuary is a good divine: that is the armour; the word of God is the sword. They are the weapons I must use when that subtle spirit, the arch-adversary of mankind, comes to tempt and sift me in my last conflict. Surely I had need be well provided with these weapons: I had need have my quiver full of them, to answer Satan with texts out of the word of God when he assaults me."

On the 19th, the pains of his body abated, but he grew drowsy and lethargic; and in the night his dissolution was expected.

The next day he was visited by his worthy friend Dr. Stonhouse, who declared his opinion that Mr. Hervey could not survive above two or three days. And speaking of the consolations which a good man enjoys in the prospect of death, Mr. Hervey replied, "True, doctor, true: the only valuable treasures are in heaven. What would it avail me now to be archbishop of Canterbury? Disease would show no respect to my mitre. That prelate (Dr. Secker) is

not only very great, but I am told he has religion really at heart: yet it is godliness and not grandeur, that will avail him hereafter. The gospel is offered to me, a poor country parson, the same as to his grace. Christ makes no difference between us. Oh! why then do ministers thus neglect the charge of so kind a Saviour, fawn upon the great, and hunt after worldly preferments with so much eagerness, to the disgrace of our order? These, these are the things, doctor, and not our poverty or obscurity, which renders the clergy so justly contemptible to the worldlings. No wonder the service of our church, grieved I am to say it, is become such a formal, lifeless thing, since it is, alas! too generally executed by persons dead to godliness in all their conversation; whose indifference to religion, and worldly-minded behaviour, proclaims the little regard they pay to the doctrines of the Lord who bought them."

When the doctor was going away, Mr. Hervey reminded him of a dangerous fall from his horse which he had met with not long before, by which he had been much bruised; and observing that he looked pale, he hoped he would think on such narrow escapes, so often fatal to others, as a warning to him from God, and remember them as such; adding, "How careful ought we to be to improve these years which remain, at a time of life when but few can remain to us!" At that time both were turned of forty.

The day before his death, Mr. Hervey attempting to walk a few steps in his room, his strength failing him, he must have fallen, if not supported; a fainting fit ensued, and it was some time before he recovered. When he came to himself, his brother William, who was come from London to see him,

said, "We were afraid you were gone." He answered, "I wish I had."

On the 25th, his curate paying him his morning visit, Mr. Hervey, sitting in an easy chair, for he was unable to lie in bed, said, "Sir, I cannot talk with you to day." He complained much of a great inward conflict which he had; and laying his hand on his breast, said, "Oh! you know not how great a conflict I have." During this time his eyes were almost constantly elevated to heaven, and his hands clasped in prayer; he frequently said, "When this great conflict is over, then"—but added no more.

Dr. Stonhouse came to him about three hours before he expired; to whom he strongly urged the importance of his everlasting concerns, as here is no abiding place; and entreated him not to be overcharged with the cares of this life; but in the multiplicity of his business, to attend to the one thing needful:

> "Which done, the poorest can no wants endure;
> And which not done, the richest must be poor."

The doctor observing the difficulty with which he spoke, from the phlegm which oppressed him, and finding by his languid pulse that his dissolution was near, desired that he would spare himself. "No, doctor, no," was his reply; "you tell me that I have but a few moments to live; Oh! let me spend them in adoring our great Redeemer." He then said, "Though my heart and my flesh fail me, yet God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." He expatiated, also, on those words, *All things are yours, life and death, for ye are Christ's.* "Here," says he, "is the treasure of a Christian. Death is reckoned among this invento-

ry, and a noble treasure it is. How thankful am I for death, as it is the passage through which I pass to the Lord and Giver of eternal life; and as it frees me from all this misery you now see me endure, and which I am willing to endure, as long as God thinks fit; for I know he will, in his own good time, dismiss me from the body. These light afflictions are but for a moment; and then comes an eternal weight of glory. O! welcome, welcome, Death. Thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian. *To live is Christ, but to die is gain.*

When the doctor was taking his final leave, Mr. Hervey expressed great gratitude for his visits, though medicine had been unable to relieve him. He then paused a little, and with great composure, although the pangs of death were upon him, said, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy* most holy and comfortable *word, for mine eyes have seen thy* precious *salvation.* "Here, doctor, is my cordial: what are all the cordials given to support the dying in comparison of that which arises from the promises of salvation by Christ? This, this supports me." About three o'clock, he said, "The great conflict is over: now all is done." After which, he scarce spoke any words intelligibly, except now and then, *precious salvation.* During the last hour he said nothing, but leaned his head againts the side of an easy chair; and, without the least struggle, expired between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, on Christmas-day, 1758, in the forty fifth year of his age: on that day when he had so often displayed the mercy and dignity of The Redeemer.

He was interred three days afterwards, under the middle of the communion-table in the chancel of Weston-Favell. His funeral was exceedingly plain,

according to his particular request but numerously attended by his pious and affectionate relations; by a grateful and sorrowful congregation, deeply lamenting the loss they had sustained. This was the only monument which he desired; and, indeed, for many years, there was no memorial of the place of his sepulchre, until his excellent and only surviving sister caused the following to be inscribed on the place where his body was deposited:

Here lie the Remains
of the Rev. JAMES HERVEY, A. M.
(late rector of this Parish)
That very pious Man,
And much-admired Author,
Who died Dec. 25th, 1758,
In the 45th Year of his Age.

Reader, expect no more to make him known,
Vain the fond elegy and figured stone;
A name more lasting shall his writings give;
There view display'd his heavenly soul, and live.

The mind finds a melancholy but pleasing satisfaction in contemplating the latter end of the righteous; the death-bed of the good man is a privileged spot; we dwell with attention on his last moments, and are pleased with every new proof of the sincerity of his devotion and the confidence of his hopes.

As a clergyman, Mr. Hervey performed all the duties of his station in the best and strictest manner. Not content with the public duty on a Sunday, he established a lecture on Wednesday evening, except during hay-time and harvest. The expense of lighting the church during the winter months he paid out of his own pocket, that he might not put the parish to an expense. But for some time be-

fore his death, he was unable to make the usual change with his curate at Collingtree; to visit his parishioners from house to house; or to continue his weekly lecture. Perhaps this might give him too much concern; but it is a difficult task, with the desire of being useful, quietly to submit to be laid aside.

He preached on Sundays to numerous and very attentive congregations; many of whom came from very distant parts. His voice was clear and harmonious, though not strong; and he was a very excellent reader, as well as preacher. He always preached without notes, or those very short ones, except on some particular occasions. When his strength would permit him, he generally preached about an hour; and his discourses were judicious, clear and free from any vain repetitions. In his public addresses, he studied simplicity and plainness: he did not wish to captivate by the elegance of his language, or the display of the variety and extent of his learning; but to inform the most ignorant, to interest the careless, and to do good to all.

In catechising the children, he was affectionate, familiar, and engaging; leading them by short and pertinent questions, to think for themselves, and to understand what they said. Observing some of his parishioners indolent on a Sunday morning or engaged in secular concerns, he thus catechised the children on the fourth commandment "Do they keep holy the Sabbath-day who lie in bed till eight or nine o'clock in the morning, instead of rising to say their prayers, and read the Bible?" "No, sir." —"Do those keep the Sabbath who fodder their cattle when other people are going to church?" "No, sir."—"Does God Almighty bless such people who go to alehouses, and do not mind the instruction of

their minister?" "No, sir,"—"Don't those who love God read the Bible in their families, particularly on Sunday evenings, and have every day family prayers, morning and evening, in their houses?" "Yes, sir." In this easy and simple manner did he lead the young mind, and guard them against the conduct of parents or masters who ought to have set them a better example.

Mr. Hervey's deep humility was a constant protection to him: he was always watchful over himself, and was never known to be in a passion. When he was unjustly aspersed, he would say, "Our enemies are sometimes our best friends, and tells us truths; and then we should amend our faults, and be thankful for such information: and if what they say be not true, and only spoken through malice, then such persons are to be considered as diseased in mind, and we should pray for them. They are to be pitied; and I might as justly be angry with a man who is diseased in body."

His gratitude to God and man was very great and uniform: the least acts of kindness called forth the most lively expressions of thankfulness from him.

Although he had collected much knowledge, and was able to shine with scholars, yet he often submitted his writings to be corrected by those who were far inferior to himself; and he was never better pleased than when several alterations were made. His industry and application will appear the more extraordinary, when it is considered that, in the latter years of his short life he was seldom free from langour and pain; his constitution being very delicate, and suffering from every cold and exertion. In these states he exhibited the useful example of meekness and resignation, patiently submitting himself to the Divine disposal.

His numerous writings, and the success which they met with, formed a source of charity which was entirely appropriated to the poor and needy; and yet this was not equal to the extent of his benevolence. He was literally his own executor; and, at the last, desired, if there was any money remaining, it might be distributed in warm clothing to the poor at that inclement season.

Mr. Hervey was never married, although he highly approved of that estate; and often said, that he should certainly have married, but from his continued ill health and infirmity.

He was fond of the exercise of riding on horseback, as favourable to meditation and health, which he partook when the weather and his strength would permit him.

With every part of learning, either ornamental or useful, he was well acquainted. He made no small proficiency in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin; and, indeed, composed with ease in the last. But all his attainments were devoted to the service of religion; and he regarded no book, and no subject, but as it might advance the great object of which he had constantly in view.

With his genius and variety of powers, he might easily have shone as a poet; but he had no ambition of this kind: some few poems, which he wrote when young, he was careful to destroy. Most of his works, particularly the Meditations and the Dialogues, would easily assume a poetical form. The former of them have been turned into blank verse by Mr. Newcomb, of Hackney, after the manner of Young's Night Thoughts. Mr. Hervey saw part of this versification, and it met with his warmest approbation.

In the recommending of books, and the characters which Mr. Hervey gave of them, you may sometimes discover, that the benevolence of his temper warped his critical judgment; and, being well pleased himself, he has, at times, been rather profuse in his praises.

His family worship was regular and exemplary: he made the servants read a portion of the Scriptures, on which he occasionally made short, pertinent, and useful remarks, which he expected they should recollect when he questioned them again; this was followed by earnest and humble prayer. In the character of Camillus he has drawn the picture of his own family-worship; and had Mr. Hervey been a father, there can be no doubt but he would have proved such an exemplary parent as he has described Camillus to be.

Some observations may naturally be expected concerning his numerous posthumous letters, and especially the eleven to Mr. John Wesley, which have caused so much conversation. In the eager desire to publish all the literary remains of a great or good man, there is often displayed more warm and indiscreet friendship than cool and accurate judgment, and a strict regard to what he himself would have done. The easy confidence of free and familiar intercourse is too often violated; and secrets are betrayed, or unfavourable conjectures indulged, which can gratify no useful purpose. No man is equally wise; and although exemplary in his conduct, he does not wish to appear before the public in every little note which he has written, or in every opinion which he may advance. As a confidential conversation is not to be divulged, so the epistolary intercourse of friends in general should be equally reserved. What is not originally in-

tended for the public, is seldom fit to appear before them. This was clearly Mr. Hervey's own opinion and conduct. These remarks may be said scarcely to apply to the eleven letters to Mr. Wesley, which were certainly written by Mr. Hervey, and intended for the press. Had his life been spared, it is well known that he intended to have softened the asperity of some expressions; and I believe, there is not a doubt that some friends, more zealous than judicious, added to this acrimony, and were glad to attack their opponent with severity, under the shelter of so exemplary a man, and so distinguished a writer: on this account I conceive that those letters must be read with some grains of allowance; and if they contain his sentiments, they do not altogether breathe his spirit. Some indulgence must be made for a suffering and languid mind, irritated by controversy; and some censure may deservedly be past on the confidence of friendship abused, and the sanction of his extensive reputation given to the severity which was not his own.

Few characters, in ancient or modern times, have combined more excellencies, or displayed more virtues, than Mr. J. HERVEY; whether we consider his sincerity as a friend, his zeal as a divine, his knowledge as a scholar, his mildness and patience, his charity and love, as a man and a Christian.

MEDITATIONS

AMONG

THE TOMBS.

Every stone that we look upon, in this Repository of past Ages, is both an *Entertainment* and a *Monitor*.

PLAIN DEALER, vol. 1. No. 42.

PREFACE.

The first of these occasional Meditations begs leave to remind my readers of their *latter end;* and would invite them to set, not their houses only, but which is inexpressibly more needful, their souls in order; that they may be able, through all the intermediate stages, to look forward upon their approaching exit without any *anxious apprehensions;* and, when the great change commences, may bid adieu to terrestrial things, with all the *calmness* of a cheerful resignation, with all the *comforts* of a well grounded faith.

The other attempts to sketch out some litttle traces of the *all-sufficiency* of our *Redeemer* for the grand and gracious purposes of everlasting salvation: that a sense of his unutterable dignity and infinite perfections, may incite us to regard him with sentiments of the most profound *veneration;* to long for an assured interest in his merits with all the ardency of *desire;* and to trust in his powerful mediation, with an *affiance* not to be shaken by any temptations, not to be shared with any performances of our own.

I flatter myself, that the Thoughts conceived among the *Tombs* may be welcome to the *serious* and *humane* mind: because, as there are few who have not consigned the remains of some dear *relations* or honoured *friends* to those silent repositories, so there are none but must be sensible that this is the *house appointed for all living*, and that they themselves are shortly to remove into the same

solemn mansions. And who would not turn aside, for a while, from the most favourite amusements, to view the *place* where his once-loved *companions* lie? Who would not sometimes survey those *apartments* where he *himself* is to take up an *abode* till time shall be no more?

As to the other little essay, may I not humbly presume that the very subject itself will recommend the remarks? For, who is not delighted with the prospect of the blooming creation, and even charmed with the *delicate attractions* of flowers? Who does not covet to assemble them in the garden, or wear them in a nosegay? Since this is a passion so universal, who would not be willing to render it productive of the sublimest improvement? This peice of *holy frugality* I have ventured to suggest, and endeavoured to exemplify, in the second letter; that, while the hand is cropping the transient beauties of a flower, the attentive mind may be enriching itself with solid and lasting good. And I cannot but entertain some pleasing hopes, that the nicest taste may receive and relish *religious impressions*, when they are conveyed by such *lovely monitors;* when the instructive lessons are found, not on the leaves of some formidable *folio*, but stand legible on the fine *sarcenet* of a *narcissus;* when they savour not of the *lamp* and *recluse*, but come breathing from the fragrant bosom of a *jonquil*.

MEDITATIONS

AMONG

THE TOMBS.

IN A LETTER TO A LADY.

MADAM,

TRAVELLING lately into *Cornwall*, I happened to alight at a considerable village in that county; where, finding myself under an unexpected necessity of staying a little, I took a walk to the *church*. The doors, like the heaven to which they lead, were wide open, and readily admitted an unworthy stranger. Pleased with the opportunity, I resolved to spend a few minutes under the sacred roof.

In a situation so retired and awful, I could not avoid falling into a train of meditations, *serious* and *mournfully pleasing;* which, I trust, were in some degree profitable to *me*, while they possessed and warmed my thoughts; and, if they may administer any satisfaction to *you*, Madam, now they are recollected, and committed to writing, I shall receive a fresh pleasure from them.

It was an ancient pile; reared by hands, that, ages ago, were mouldered into dust; situate in the centre of a large *burial ground;* remote from all the noise and hurry of tumultuous life; the body

spacious; the structure lofty; the whole magnificently plain. A row of regular pillars extended themselves through the midst; supporting the roof with simplicity and with dignity. The light that passed through the windows, seemed to shed a kind of *luminous obscurity*, which gave every object a grave and venerable air. The deep *silence* added to the gloomy aspect, and both heightened by the loneliness of the place, greatly increased the solemnity of the scene. A sort of *religious dread* stole insensibly on my mind, while I advanced, all pensive and thoughtful, along the inmost aisle: such a dread, as hushed every ruder passion; and dissipated all the gay images of an alluring world.

Having adored that Eternal Majesty, who, far from being confined to temples made with hands, has heaven for his throne and the earth for his footstool, I took particular notice of a handsome *altar-piece;* presented, as I was afterwards informed, by the master-builders of *Stow;* out of gratitude, I presume, to that gracious God, who carried them through their work, and enabled them to "bring forth their top-stone with joy."

Oh! how amiable is *gratitude!* especially when it has the Supreme benefactor for its object. I have always looked upon gratitude as the most exalted principle that can actuate the heart of man. It has something noble, disinterested, and (if I may be allowed the term) generously devout. *Repentance* indicates our nature fallen, and *prayer* turns chiefly upon a regard to one's self. But the exercises of gratitude subsisted in Paradise, when there was no fault to deplore; and will be perpetuated in heaven, when "God shall be all in all."

The language of this sweet temper is, "I am unspeakably obliged: what return shall I make?"

And surely, it is no improper expressions of an unfeigned thankfulness, to decorate our Creator's courts, and *beautify* "the *place* where his honour dwelleth." Of old, the habitation of his feet was glorious; let it not, now, be sordid or contemptible. It must grieve an ingenious mind, and be a reproach to any people, to have their own houses wainscotted with cedar, and painted with vermillion; while the temple of the Lord of hosts is destitute of every decent ornament.

Here I recollected and was charmed with *Solomon's* fine address to the Almighty, at the *dedication* of his famous temple. With immense charge, and exquisite skill, he had erected the most rich and finished structure that the sun ever saw. Yet, upon a review of his work, and a reflection on the transcendant perfections of the Godhead, how he exalts the one and abases the other! The building was too *glorious* for the mightiest monarch to inhabit; too *sacred*, for unhallowed feet even to enter; yet infinitely too *mean* for the Deity to reside in. It was, and the royal worshipper acknowledged it to be, a most marvellous vouchsafement in uncreated Excellency, "to put his name there." The whole passage breathes such a delicacy, and is animated with such a sublimity of sentiment, that I cannot persuade myself to pass on without repeating it. *But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold! the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!* Incomparable saying; worthy the wisest of men. Who would not choose to possess such an elevated devotion, rather than to own all the glittering materials of that sumptuous edifice?

We are apt to be struck with admiration at the stateliness and grandeur of a masterly performance

in architecture; and, perhaps, on a sight of the ancient sanctuary, should have made the *superficial* observation of the disciples, "What manner of stones, and what buildings are here?" But what a *nobler* turn of thought, and *juster* taste of things, does it discover, to join with *Israel's* king in celebrating the condescension of the Divine inhabitant! that the High and Lofty One, who fills immensity with his glory, should, in a peculiar manner, fix his abode there! should *there* manifest an extraordinary degree of his benedictive presence; permit sinful mortals to approach his majesty; and promise "to make them joyful in his house of prayer!" *This* should more sensibly affect our hearts, than the most curious arrangement of stones can delight our eyes.

Nay, the everlasting God does not disdain to dwell in our *souls* by his Holy Spirit; and to make even our *bodies* his temple. Tell me, ye that frame critical judgments, and balance nicely the distinction of things; "is this most astonishing, or most rejoicing?" He humbleth himself, the Scripture assures us, even to behold the things that are in heaven. 'Tis a most condescending favour, if he pleases to take the least approving notice of angels and archangels, when they bow down in homage from their celestial thrones. Will he then graciously regard, will he be united, most *intimately united*, to poor, polluted, breathing dust? Unparallelled honour! Invaluable privilege! Be this my portion, and I shall not covet crowns, nor envy conquerors.

But let me remember, what a *sanctity* of disposition and *uprightness* of conversation, so exalted a relation demands: remember this, "and rejoice with trembling." Durst I commit any iniquity,

while I tread these hallowed courts? could the *Jewish* High Priest allow himself in any known transgression, while he made that solemn yearly entrance into the Holy of Holies, and stood before the immediate presence of *Jehovah?* No, truly. In *such* circumstances, a thinking person must shudder at the most remote solicitation to any wilful offence. I should *now* be shocked at the least indecency of behaviour, and am apprehensive of every appearance of evil. And why do we not carry this holy jealousy into all our *ordinary* life? Why do we not, in every place, reverence ourselves; as persons dedicated to the divinity, as *living temples* of the Godhead? For, if we are real, and not merely nominal Christians, the God of glory, according to his own promise, *dwells in us, and walks in us.* O! that this *one* doctrine of our religion might operate, with an abiding efficacy, upon our consciences! It would be instead of a *thousand* laws, to regulate our conduct; instead of a *thousand* motives, to quicken us in holiness. Under the influence of *such* a conviction, we should study to maintain a purity of intention, a dignity of action; and to walk worthy of that transcendantly majestic Being, who admits us to a fellowship with himself, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

The next thing which engaged my attention, was the *lettered floor.* The pavement, somewhat, like *Ezekiel's* roll, was written over from one end to the other. I soon perceived the comparison to hold good in another respect; and the inscriptions to be matter of *mourning, lamentation, and wo.* They seemed to court my observation; silently inviting me to read them. And what would these dumb monitors inform me of? "That, beneath their little circumferences, were deposited such and such

pieces of clay, which once *lived*, and *moved*, and *talked:* that they had received a charge to preserve their names, and were the remaining trustees of their memory."

Ah! said I, is such my situation? The adorable Creator around me, and the bones of my fellow creatures under me! Surely, then, I have great reason to cry out, with the revering patriarch, *How dreadful is this place!* Seriousness and devotion become this house for ever. May I never enter it lightly or irreverently; but with a profound awe, and godly fear.

O! that they were wise! said the inspired penman. It was his last wish for his dear people. He breathed it out, and gave up the ghost. But what is wisdom? It consists not in refined speculations, accurate researches into nature, or an universal acquaintance with history. The divine lawgiver settles this important point in his next aspiration. *O! that they understood this!* that they had right apprehensions of their spiritual interests and eternal concerns! that they had eyes to discern, and inclinations to pursue, the things which belong to their peace! But how shall they attain this valuable knowledge? I send them not, adds the illustrious teacher, to turn over all the volumes of literature: they may acquire, and much more expeditiously, this science of life, *by considering their latter end.* This spark of heaven is often lost under the glitter of pompous erudition; but shines clearly in the gloomy mansions of the tomb: drowned is the gentle whisper admidst the *noise* of secular affairs; but speaks distinctly in the *retirements* of serious contemplation. Behold! how providentially I am brought to the school of wisdom! The grave is the most faithful master; and these instances of mor-

tality the most instructive lessons. Come then, *calm attention*, and compose my thoughts; come, thou *celestial Spirit*, and enlighten my mind; that I may so peruse these awful pages, as to become "wise unto salvation."

Examining the records of mortality, I found the memorials of a *promiscuous* multitude. They were huddled, at least they rested together, without any regard to rank or seniority. None were ambitious of the uppermost rooms or chief seats, in this house of mourning. None entertained fond and eager expectations of being honourably greeted in their darksome cells. The man of years and experience, reputed as an oracle in his generation, was content to lie down at the feet of a babe. In this house appointed for all living, the servant was equally accommodated, and lodged in the same story with his master. The *poor indigent* lay as softly and slept as soundly, as the most *oppulent possessor*. All the distinction that subsisted was a grassy hillock, bound with osiers; or a sepulchral stone, ornamented with imagery.

Why then, said my working thoughts, O! why should we raise such a mighty stir about *superiority* and *precedence;* when the next remove will reduce us all to a state of equal meanness? Why should we exalt ourselves, or debase others; since we must all, one day, be upon a common level, and blended together in the same undistinguished dust? O! that this consideration might humble my own and others' pride, and sink our imaginations as low as our habitations will shortly be!

Among these confused relics of humanity, there are, without doubt, persons of *contrary* interests and *contradicting* sentiments. But death, like some able Daysman, has laid his hand on the contending

parties, and brought all their differences to an amicable conclusion. Here enemies, sworn enemies, dwell together in unity. They drop every imbittered thought, and forget that they once were foes. Perhaps their crumbling bones *mix*, as they *moulder:* and those who, while they lived, stood aloof in irreconcileable variance, here fall into mutual embraces, and even incorporate with each other in the grave. O! that we might learn from these friendly ashes, not to perpetuate the memory of *injuries*, not to foment the fever of *resentment*, nor cherish the turbulence of *passion;* that there may be as little animosity and disagreement in the land of the living, as there is in the congregation of the dead! But I suspend for a while such *general* observations, and address myself to a more *particular* inquiry.

Yonder *white stone*, emblem of the innocence it covers, informs the beholder of one who breathed out its tender soul almost in the instant of receiving it. There, the peaceful *infant*, without so much as knowing what labour and vexation mean, "lies still and is quiet; it sleeps and is at rest." Staying only to wash away its native impurity in the laver of regeneration, it bid a speedy adieu to time and terrestrial things. What did the little hasty sojourner find so forbidding and disgustful in our upper world, to occasion its precipitate exit? 'Tis written, indeed, of its suffering Saviour, that when he had tasted the vinegar mingled with gall, he would not drink. And did our new-come stranger begin to *sip* the cup of life; but perceiving the bitterness, turn away its head, and refuse the *draught?* Was this the cause, why the wary babe only opened its eyes; just looked on the light; and then withdrew into the more inviting regions of undisturbed repose?

Happy voyager! no sooner launched, than *arri-*

ted at the haven! But more eminently happy *they*, who have passed the waves, and weathered all the storms of a troublesome and dangerous world! who, "through many tribulations, have entered into the kingdom of heaven;" and thereby brought *honour* to their divine Convoy, administered *comfort* to the companions of their toil, and left an instructive *example* to succeeding pilgrims.

Highly favoured probationer! accepted without being exercised! It was thy peculiar privilege, not to *feel* the slightest of those evils which *oppress* thy surviving kindred; which frequently fetch groans from the most manly fortitude or most elevated faith. The arrows of calamity, barbed with anguish, are *often* fixed deep in our choicest comforts. The fiery darts of temptation, shot from the hand of hell, are *always* flying in showers around our integrity. To thee, sweet babe, both these distresses and dangers are alike unknown.

Consider this, *ye mourning parents*, and dry up your tears. Why should you lament that your little ones are crowned with victory, before the sword is drawn or the conflict begun? Perhaps, the Supreme Disposer of events foresaw some inevitable snare of temptation forming, or some dreadful storm of adversity impending. And why should you be so dissatisfied with that *kind precaution*, which housed your pleasant plant, and removed into shelter a tender flower before the thunders roared; before the lightnings flew; before the tempest poured its rage? O remember! they are not lost, but *taken away from the evil to come.*—

At the same time, let *survivors*, doomed to *bear the heat and burden of the day*, for their encouragement reflect, that it is more honourable to have entered the lists, and to have fought the good fight,

before they come off conquerors. They who have borne the cross, and submitted to afflictive providences, with a cheerful resignation; have girded up the loins of their mind, and performed their Master's will, with an honest and persevering fidelity; these, having glorified their Redeemer on earth, will, probably, be as stars of the *first magnitude* in heaven. They will shine with brighter beams, be replenished with stronger joys, in their Lord's everlasting kingdom.

Here lies the grief of a fond mother, and the blasted expectation of an indulgent father. The *youth* grew up, like a well-watered plant; he shot deep, rose high, and bid fair for manhood. But just as the *cedar* began to tower, and promised, ere long, to be the pride of the wood, and prince among the neighbouring trees—behold! the *axe* is laid unto the root; the fatal blow is struck; and all its branching honours tumbled to the dust. And did he fall alone? No, the hopes of his father that begat him, and the pleasing prospects of her that bare him, fell and were crushed together with him.

Doubtless, it would have pierced one's heart, to have beheld the tender parents following the breathless youth to his long home. Perhaps, drowned in tears, and all overwhelmed with sorrows, they stood, like weeping statues, on this very spot. Methinks, I see the deeply distressed mourners attending the sad solemnity. How they wring their hands, and pour floods from their eyes! Is it fancy? or do I really hear the passionate *mother*, in an agony of affliction, taking her final leave of the darling of her soul? Dumb she remained, while the awful obsequies were performing; dumb with grief, and leaning upon the partner of her woes. But now the inward anguish struggles for vent; it grows too

big to be repressed. She advances to the brink of the grave. All her soul is in her eyes. She fastens one more look upon the *dear doleful* object, before the pit shuts its mouth upon him. And as she looks, she cries, in broken accents, interrupted by many a rising sob, she cries—"Farewell my son! my son! my only beloved! would to God I had died for thee! Farewell, my child; and farewell all my earthly happiness! I shall never more see good in the land of the living. Attempt not to comfort me. I will go mourning, all my days, till my gray hairs come down, with sorrow, to the grave!"

From this affecting representation, let parents be convinced, how highly it concerns them to cultivate the *morals*, and secure the *immortal* interests of their children. If you really love the offspring of your own bodies; if your bowels yearn over those amiable pledges of conjugal endearment; spare no pains, give all diligence, I entreat you, to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" then, may you have joy in their life, or consolation in their death. If their span is *prolonged*, their unblameable and useful conduct will be the staff of your age and the balm for declining nature. Or, if the number of their years be cut off in the *midst*, you may commit their remains to the dust with much the same comfortable expectations as you send the survivors to places of genteel education. You may commit them to the dust with cheering hopes of receiving them again to your arms *inexpressibly improved* in every noble and endearing accomplishment.

'Tis certainly a *severe trial*, and much more afflictive than I am able to imagine, to resign a lovely blooming creature, sprung from your own loins, to the gloomy recesses of corruption. *Thus* to resign

him, after having been long dandled upon your knees, united to your affections by a thousand ties of tenderness, and now become both the delight of your eyes and the support of your family! to have such a one torn from your bosom, and thrown into darkness; doubtless, it must be like a dagger in your hearts. But Oh! how much more cutting to you, and confounding to the child, to have the soul separated from God; and, for *shameful ignorance or early impiety*, transmitted to places of eternal torment! How would it aggravate your distress, and add a distracting *emphasis* to all your sighs, if you should follow the pale corpse with these bitter reflections! "This dear creature, though long ago capable of knowing good from evil, is gone *out* of the world before it had learned the great design of coming *into* it. A short-lived momentary existence it received from me; but no good instructions, no holy admonitions, nothing to further its well-being in that everlasting state upon which it is now entered. The *poor body* is consigned to the coffin, and carried out to consume away in the cold and silent grave. And what reason have I to suppose that the *precious soul* is in a better condition? May I not justly fear, that, sentenced by the righteous Judge, it is going, or gone away, into the pains of endless punishment? Perhaps, while I am *bewailing* its untimely departure, it may be *cursing*, in outer darkness that ever to be deplored, that most calamitous day, when it was born of such a careless ungodly parent as I have been."

Nothing, I think, but the knawings of that worm which never dies can equal the anguish of these self-condemning thoughts. The tortures of a rack must be an easy suffering, compared with the stings and horrors of such a remorse. How earnestly do I

wish, that as many as are intrusted with the management of children, would take timely care to prevent these scourges of conscience; by endeavouring to conduct their minds into an early *knowledge* of Christ, and a cordial *love* of his truth!

On this hand is lodged one, whose sepulchral stone tells a most pitiable tale indeed! Well may the *little images*, reclined over the sleeping ashes, hang down their heads with that pensive air! None can consider so mournful a story without feeling some touches of sympathizing concern. His *age* twenty-eight; his death *sudden;* himself cut down in the prime of life, amidst all the vivacity and vigour of Manhood; while, "his breasts were full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow." Probably he entertained no apprehensions of the evil hour. And indeed who could have suspected, that so bright a sun should go down at noon? To human appearance, his hill stood strong. Length of days seemed written in his sanguine countenance. He solaced himself with the prospect of a long, long series of earthly satisfactions. When lo! an unexpected stroke descends! descends from that mighty arm, which "overturneth the mountains by their roots; and crushes the imaginary hero *before the moth*," as quickly, and more easily, than our fingers press such a feeble fluttering insect to death.

Perhaps the *nuptial joys* were all he thought on. Were not such the breathings of his enamoured soul! "Yet a very little while, and I shall possess the utmost of my wishes. I shall call my charmer mine; and in *her*, enjoy whatever my heart can crave." In the midst of such enchanting views, had some faithful friend but softly reminded him of an opening grave, and the end of all things; how *unseasonable* would he have reckoned the admoni-

tion! Yet, though all warm with life, and rich in visionary bliss, he was even then tottering on the brink of both. Dreadful vicissitude! to have the *bridal* festivity turned into the *funeral* solemnity! Deplorable misfortune! to be shipwrecked in the very haven! and to perish even in sight of happiness! What a memorable proof is here of the frailty of man, in his best estate! Look, O! look on this monument, ye *gay* and *careless!* Attend to this date; and boast no more of to morrow!

Who can tell but the *bride-maids*, girded with gladness, had prepared the marriage-bed? had decked it with the richest covers, and dressed it in pillows of down? When—oh! trust not in youth, or strength, or in any thing mortal; for there is nothing certain, nothing to be depended on, beneath the unchangeable God—Death, relentless Death, is making him another kind of bed in the dust of the earth. Unto this he must be conveyed, not with a splendid procession of *joyous attendants;* but stretched in the *gloomy hearse*, and followed by a train of mourners. On this he must take up a lonely lodging, nor ever be released, "till the heavens are no more." In vain does the consenting *fair-one* put on her ornaments, and expect her spouse. Did she not, like *Sisera's* mother, look out of the lattice; chide the delays of her beloved; and wonder "why his chariot was so long in coming?" little thinking, that the *intended* bridegroom had forever done with transitory things! that now everlasting cares employ his mind, without one single remembrance of his lovely *Lucinda!* Go, disappointed virgin! go, mourn the uncertainty of all created bliss! Teach thy soul to aspire after a sure and *immutable felicity!* For the once gay and gallant *Fidelio* sleeps in other embraces; even

in the icy arms of Death! forgetful, eternally forgetful, of the world, and *thee!*

Hitherto, one is tempted to exclaim against the king of terrors, and call him *capriciously cruel.* He seems, by beginning at the wrong end of the register to have inverted the laws of nature. Passing over the couch of decrepit age, he has nipped infancy in its *bud;* blasted youth in its *bloom;* and torn up manhood in its full *maturity.* Terrible indeed are these providences, yet not unsearchable the counsels:—

"For us they sicken, and for us they die."

Such strokes must not only grieve the relatives, but *surprise* the whole neighbourhood. They sound a powerful alarm to heedless dreaming mortals, and are intended as a remedy for our carnal security. Such passing-bells inculcate loudly our Lord's admonition: "Take ye heed, watch, and pray; for ye know not when the time is." We nod, like intoxicated creatures, upon the very verge of a tremendous precipice. These astonishing dispensations are the kind messengers of Heaven, to *rouse* us from our *supineness,* and quicken us into timely circumspection. I need not, surely, accommodate them with language, nor act as their interpreter. Let every one's conscience be awake, and this will appear their awful meaning: "O! ye sons of men, in the midst of life you are in death. No state, no circumstances, can ascertain your preservation a single moment. So *strong* is the tyrant's arm, that nothing can resist its force; so *true* his aim, that nothing can elude the blow. *Sudden* as lightning, sometimes, is his arrow launched; and wounds, and kills, in the twinkling of an eye. Never promise

yourselves safety in any expedient but constant preparation. The fatal shafts fly so promiscuously, that none can guess the next victim. Therefore, *be ye always ready: for in such an hour as ye think not*, the final summons cometh."

Be ye always ready; *for in such an hour as ye think not*—Important admonition! Methinks; it reverberates from sepulchre to sepulchre, and addresses me with line upon line, precept upon precept. The reiterated warning, I acknowledge, is too needful; may co-operating grace render it effectual! The momentous truth, though worthy to be *engraved* on the tables of a most tenacious memory is but slightly *sketched* on the transient flow of passion. We see our neighbours fall; we turn pale at the shock; and feel, perhaps, a trembling dread. No sooner are they removed from our sight; but, driven in the whirl of business, or lulled in the languors of pleasure, we forget the providence, and neglect the errand. The impression made on our unstable minds is like the trace of an arrow through the penetrated air, or the path of a keel in the furrowed wave. Strange stupidity! To cure it, another monitor bespeaks me from a neighbouring stone. It contains the narrative of an unhappy mortal, snatched from his friends, and hurried to the awful bar, without leisure, either to take a *last farewel* of the one, or to put up so much as a *single prayer* preparatory for the other: killed, according to the usual expression, by a sudden stroke of casuality.

Was it then a random stroke? Doubtless, the blow came from an *aiming*, though invisible hand. God presideth over the armies of heaven; God ruleth among the inhabitants of the earth; and God conducteth what men call *Chance*. Nothing, nothing comes to pass through a blind and undiscern-

ing fatility. If accidents happen, they happen according to the exact foreknowledge, and conformably to the determinate counsels of Eternal Wisdom. The Lord, with whom are the issues of death, signs the *warrant* and gives the high commission. The seemingly fortuitous disaster is only the *agent* or the *instrument* appointed to execute the supreme decree. When the king of *Israel* was mortally wounded, it seemed to be a casual shot. *A certain man drew a bow at a venture.—At a venture*, as he thought. But his hand was strengthened by an omnipotent aid, and the shaft levelled by an unerring eye. So that, what we term *casuality* is really *providence;* accomplishing deliberate designs, but concealing its own interposition. How comforting this reflection! admirably adapted to sooth the throbbing anguish of the mourners, and compose their spirits into a quiet submission! excellently suited to dissipate the fears of godly survivors, and create a calm intrepidity even amidst innumerable perils!

How *thin* is the partition between this world and another! How *short* the transition from time to eternity! The partition, nothing more than the breath in our nostrils; and the transition may be made in the twinkling of an eye. Poor *Chremylus*, I remember, arose from the diversion of a card-table, and dropped into the dwellings of darkness. One night, *Corinna* was all gaiety in her spirits, all finery in her apparel, at a magnificent ball. The next night she lay pale and stiff, an extended corpse, and ready to be mingled with the mouldering dead. Young *Atticus* lived to see his ample and commodious seat completed: but not to spend one joyous hour under the stately roof. The sashes were hung to admit the day; but the master's eyes are closed

in endless night. The apartments were furnished to invite society or administer repose; but their lord rests in the lower parts of the earth, in the solitary silent chambers of the tomb. The gardens were planned, and a thousand elegant decorations designed; but alas! their intended possessor is gone down to "the place of skulls;" is gone down to the valley of the shadow of death.

While I am recollecting, many, I question not, are experiencing the same tragical vicissitude. The eyes of that sublime Being, who sits upon the circle of the earth, and views all its inhabitants with one comprehensive glance, even now beholds many tents in affliction—such affliction, as overwhelmed the *Egyptians* in that fatal night, when the destroying angel sheathed his arrows in all the pride of their strength:—some, sinking to the floor from their *easy chair*, and deaf even amidst the piercing shrieks of their distracted relations;—some giving up the ghost, as they sit retired, or lie reclined under the *shady arbour*, to taste the sweets of the flowery scene:—some, as they sail, associated with a *party of pleasure*, along the dancing stream, and through the laughing meads. Nor is the grim intruder mollified, though wine and music flow around:—some *intercepted*, as they are returning home; and some *interrupted*, as they enter upon an important negociation:—some arrested, with the gain of *injustice* in their hands; and some surprised, in the very act of *lewdness*, or the attempt of *cruelty*.

Legions, legions of disasters, such as no prudence can foresee, and no care prevent, lie in wait to accomplish our doom. A *starting horse* may throw his rider; may at once dash his body against the stones, and fling his soul into the invisible world. A *stack of chimneys* may tumble into the street

and crush the unwary passenger under the ruins. Even a single *tile*, dropping from the roof, may be as fatal as the fall of the whole structure. So frail, so very attentuated is the thread of life, that it not only bursts before the *storm*, but breaks even at a *breeze*. The most common occurrences, those from which we suspect not the least harm, may prove the weapons of our destruction. A grape-stone, a despicable fly, may be more mortal than *Goliath*, with all his formidable armour. Nay if God give command, our very *comforts* become *killing*. The air we breathe is our bane; and the food we eat the vehicle of death. That last enemy has unnumbered avenues for his approach; yea, lies intrenched in our very bosom, and hold his fortress in the seat of our life. The crimson fluid, which *distributes health*, is impregnated with the seeds of death. Heat may inflame it, or toil oppress it; and make it destroy the parts it was designed to cherish. Some unseen impediment may obstruct its passage, or some unknown violence may divert its course; in either of which cases, it acts the part of a poisonous draught or a deadly stab.

> Ah! in what perils is vain life engaged!
> What slight neglects, what trivial faults destroy
> The hardest frame! Of indolence, of toil
> We die; of want, of superfluity.
> The all-surrounding heaven, the vital air,
> Is big with death.

Since then we are so liable to be dispossessed of this earthly tabernacle, let us look upon ourselves only as *tenants at will;* and hold ourselves in perpetual readiness, to depart at a moment's warning. Without such an *habitual* readiness, we are like wretches that sleep on the top of a mast, while a

horrid gulf yawns, or furious waves rage below. And where can be the peace, what the satisfaction of such a state? Whereas, a prepared condition will inspire a cheerfulness of temper, not to be dismayed by any alarming accident; and create a firmness of mind, not to be overthrown by the most threatening dangers. When the city is fortified with walls, furnished with provision, guarded by able and resolute troops; what have the inhabitants to fear? what may they not enjoy? So, just so, or rather by a much surer band, are connected the *real* taste of life, and the *constant* thought of death.

I said, *Our very comforts may become killing.*—And see the truth inscribed by the hand, sealed with the signet, of fate. The marble, which graces yonder pillar, informs me, that near it are deposited the remains of *Sophronia*, the much lamented *Sophronia*, who died in *childbed*. How often does this calamity happen! The branch shoots; but the stem withers. The babe springs to light; but she that bare him breathes her last. She gives life, but gives it (O pitiable consideration!) at the expense of her own; and becomes, at once, a *mother* and a *corpse*. Or else, perhaps, she expires in severe pangs, and is herself a tomb for her infant; while the melancholy complaint of a monarch's wo is the epitaph for them both; *The children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth*. Less to be lamented, in my opinion, *this* misfortune, than the *other*. Better for the tender stranger to be stopped in the porch; than to enter, only to converse with affliction. Better, to find a grave in the womb: than to be exposed on a hazardous world, without the guardian of its infantine years, without the faithful guide of its youth.

This monument is distinguished by its finer materials and more delicate appendages. It seems to have taken its model from an affluent hand, directed by a generous heart; which thought it could never do enough for the deceased. it seems, also, to exhibit an *emblematical* picture of *Sophronia's* person and accomplishments. Is her beauty, or, what is more than beauty, her white-robed innocence, represented by the snowy *colour?* the *surface*, smoothly polished, like her amiable temper and engaging manners? the *whole* adorned, in a well-judged medium between extravagant pomp and sordid negligence, like her undissembled goodness, remote from the least ostentation, yet in all points exemplary? But ah! how vain were all these endearing charms! How vain the lustre of thy sprightly eye! How vain the bloom of thy bridal youth! How vain the honours of thy superior birth! how unable to secure the lovely possessor from the *savage violence* of death!—How ineffectual the universal esteem of thy acquaintance, the fondness of thy transported husband, or even the spotless integrity of thy character, to prolong thy span, or procure thee a short reprieve!—The concurrence of all these circumstances reminds me of those beautiful and tender lines:

> How loved, how *valued* once, avails thee not;
> To whom related, or by whom begot;
> A heap of dust alone remains of thee:
> 'Tis all THOU art!—and all the PROUD shall be!
> POPE'S *Miscell.*

Yet, though unable to divert the stroke, Christianity is sovereign to pluck out the sting of death. Is not this the silent language of those *lamps* which burn, and of that *heart*, which flames; of those

palms, which flourish, and of that crown, which glitters, in the well-imitated and gilded marble? Do they not, to the descerning eye, describe the vigilance of her faith; the fervency of her devotion; her victory over the world; and the celestial diadem, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give her at that day?

How happy the husband in such a sharer of his bed, and partner of his fortunes? Their inclinations were nicely-tuned in *unison*, and all their conversation was *harmony*. How silken the yoke to such a pair, and what blessings were twisted with such bands! every joy was heightened, and every care alleviated. Nothing seemed wanting to consummate their bliss, but a hopeful progeny rising around them; that they might see themselves multiplied in their little ones? see their mingled graces transfused into their offspring; and feel the glow of their affection *augmented*, by being *reflected* from their children. "Grant us this gift," said their united prayers, "and our satisfactions are crowned: we request no more."

Alas! how blind are mortals to future events! How unable to discern what is really good! *Give me children*, said *Rachel, or else I die:* an ardour of impatience altogether unbecoming, and as mistaken as it was unbecoming. She dies, not by the *disappointment* but by the *accomplishment*, of her desire. If children are to parents like a flowery chaplet, whose beauties blossom with ornament: and whose odours breathe delight; death, or some fell misfortune, may find means to entwine themselves with the lovely wreath. Whenever our souls are poured out, with passionate importunity, after any inferior acquisition, it may be truly said in the words of our Divine Master, *Ye know not what ye*

ask. Does Providence withhold the thing that we long for? It denies in mercy; and only withholds the occasion of our misery perhaps the instrument of our ruin. With a sickly appetite, we often loathe what is wholesome, and hanker after our bane. Where *imagination* dreams of unmingled sweets, there *experience* frequently finds the bitterness of wo.

Therefore, may we covet immoderately neither this nor that from earthly felicity; but refer the whole of our condition to the choice of unerring Wisdom. May we learn to renounce our own will, and be ready to make a sacrifice of our warmest wishes, whenever they run counter to the good pleasure of God. For, indeed, as to obey his laws, is to be perfectly free; so, to *resign* ourselves to his disposal, is to *establish* our own happiness, and to be secure from fear of evil.

Here, a small and plain stone is placed upon the ground; purchased, one would imagine, from the little fund, and formed by the hand of frugality itself. Nothing costly: not one decoration added; only a very short inscription; and that so effaced, as to be scarcely intelligible. Was the depository unfaithful to his trust? or were the letters worn by the frequent resort of the surviving family to mourn over the grave of a most valuable and beloved relative? For I perceive upon a closer inspection, that it covers the remains of a father; a *religious father*, snatched from his growing offspring before they were settled in the world, or so much as their principles fixed by a thorough education.

This, sure, is the most complicated distress that has hitherto come under our consideration. The *solemnities of such a dying chamber*, are some of the most melting and melancholy scenes imaginable.

There lies the affectionate husband; the indulgent parent; the faithful friend; and the generous master. He lies in the last extremities, and on the very point of dissolution. Art has done its all. The raging disease mocks the power of medicine. It hastens, with resistless impetuosity, to execute its dreadful errand; to rend asunder the silver cord of life, and the more delicate tie of social attachment and conjugal affection.

A *servant* or two, from a revering distance, cast many a wishful look, and condole their honoured master in the language of sighs. The condescending mildness of his commands was wont to produce an alacrity of obedience, and render their service a pleasure. The remembrance of both imbitters their grief, and makes it trickle plentifully down their honest cheeks. His *friends*, who have so often shared his joys, and gladdened his mind with their enlivening converse, now are miserable comforters. A sympathizing and mournful pity is all the relief they are able to contribute; unless it be augmented by their silent prayers for the divine succor, and a word of consolation suggested from the Scriptures. Those poor innocents, the *children*, crowd around the bed; drowned in tears, and almost frantic with grief, they sob out their little souls, and passionately cry, "Will he leave us? leave us in a helpless condition! leave us to an injurious world!"

These separate streams are all united in the distressed *spouse*, and overwhelm her breast with an impetuous tide of sorrows. In her, the lover weeps: the wife mourns; and all the mother yearns. To her the loss is beyond measure aggravated, by months and years of delightful society, and exalted friendship. Where, alas! can she meet with such unsuspected fidelity, or repose such unreserved con-

fidence? Where find so discreet a counsellor; so improving an example; and a guardian so sedulously attentive to the interests of herself and her children? See! how she hangs over the languishing bed; most tenderly solicitous to prolong a life, important and desirable far beyond her own. Or, if that be impracticable, no less tenderly officious to sooth the last agonies of her *dearer self.* Her hands, trembling under direful apprehensions, wipe the cold dews from the livid cheeks; and sometimes stay the sinking head on her gentle arms, sometimes rest it on her compassionate bosom. See! how she gazes, with a speechless ardour, on the pale countenance and meagre features. Speechless her tongue; but she looks unutterable things; while all her soft passions throb with unavailing fondness, and her very soul bleeds with exquisite anguish.

The *sufferer*, all patient and adoring, submits to the divine will; and, by submission, becomes superior to his affliction. He is sensibly touched with the disconsolate state of his attendants, and pierced with an anxious concern for his wife and his children: his wife, who will soon be a *destitute widow;* his children, who will soon be *helpless orphans.* "Yet, though cast down, not in despair." He is greatly refreshed by his trust in the everlasting covenant, and his hope of approaching glory. Religion gives a dignity to distress. At each interval of ease, he comforts his very comforters; and suffers with all the majesty of wo.

The soul, just going to abandon the tottering clay, collects all her force, and exerts her *last* efforts. The good man raises himself on his pillow; extends a kind hand to his servants, which is bathed in tears; takes an affecting farewell of his friends;

clasps his wife in a feeble embrace; kisses the dear pledges of their mutual love; and then pours all that remains of life and of strength, in the following words:—"I die, *my* dear *children;* but God, the everlasting God, will be with you. Though you lose an earthly parent, you have a Father in heaven, who lives for evermore. Nothing, nothing but an unbelieving heart and irreligious life can ever separate you from the regards of his providence —from the endearments of his love."

He could proceed no farther. His heart was full, but utterance failed. After a short pause, with difficulty, great difficulty, he added: "You, the dear *partner* of my soul, you are now the only protector of our orphans. I leave you under a weight of cares. But God, who, defendeth the cause of the widow—God, whose promise is faithfulness and truth—God hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* This revives my drooping spirits —let this support the wife of my bosom—and now, O Father of Compassions, into thy hands I commend my spirit—encouraged by thy promised goodness, *I leave my fatherless*—"

Here he fainted; fell back upon the bed; and lay for some moments bereft of his senses. As a *taper*, upon the very point of extinction, is sometimes suddenly rekindled, and leaps into a quivering flame; so *life*, before it totally expired, gave a parting struggle, and once more looked abroad from the opening eye lids. He would fain have spoke: fain have uttered the sentence he began. More than once he essayed: but the organs of speech were become like a broken vessel; and nothing but the obstructing phlegm rattled in his throat. His *aspect*, however, *spoke* affection inexpressible. With all the father, all the husband still living in

his looks, he takes one more veiw of those *dear children*, whom he had often beheld with a parental triumph. He turns his dying eyes on that *beloved woman*, whom he never beheld but with a glow of delight. Fixed in this posture, amidst smiles of love, and under a gleam of heaven, they shine out their last.

Upon this, the silent sorrow bursts into loud laments. They weep, and refuse to be comforted; till some length of time had given vent to the excess of passion, and the consolations of religion had stanched their bleeding woes. Then the afflicted family search for the sentence, which fell *unfinished* from those loved, those venerable and pious lips. They find it recorded by the prophet *Jeremiah*, containing the direction of Infinite Wisdom, and the promise of unbounded Goodness: *Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.* This, now, is the comfort of their life, and the joy of their heart. They treasure it up in their memories. It is the best of *legacies* and an *inexhaustable* fund; a fund which will supply all their wants, by entailing the blessing of heaven on all their honest labours. They are rich, they are happy, in this sacred pledge of the divine favour. They fear no evil; they want no good; because God is their portion, and their guardian God.

No sooner turned from one *memento* of my own, and memorial of another's decease, but a second, a third, a long succession of these melancholy monitors crowd upon my sight. That which has fixed my observation, is one of a more *grave* and sable *aspect* than the former. I suppose it preserves the relics of a more aged person. One would conjecture that he made somewhat of a figure in his sta-

tion among the living; as his monument does among the funeral marbles. Let me draw near, and inquire of the stone, '*who* or, *what*, is beneath its surface. I am informed, he was once the owner of a considerable estate; which was much improved by his own application and management; that he left the world in the busy period of life, avanced a little beyond the meridian.

Probably, replied my musing mind, one of those *indefatigable drudges*, who rise early, late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness; not to secure the loving kindness of the Lord; not to make provisions for any reasonable necessity; but only to *amass* together ten thousand times more than they can possibly *use*. Did he not lay schemes for enlarging his fortune, and aggrandizing his family? Did he not purpose to join field to field, and add house to house; till his possessions were almost as vast as his desires? That, then, he would sit down and enjoy what he had acquired; breathe a while from his toilsome pursuit of things temporal, and, perhaps think a little of things eternal.

But see the folly of *worldly wisdom!* How silly, how childish, is the sagacity of (what is called) manly and masterly prudence; when it contrives more solicitously for TIME than it provides for ETERNITY! How strangely infatuated are those subtle heads, which weary themselves in concerting measures for *phantoms* of a day; and scarce bestow a thought on *everlasting realities!* When every wheel moves on smoothly; when all the well-disposed designs are ripening apace for execution; and the long-expected crisis of enjoyment seems to approach; behold! God from on high laughs at the *Babel-builder*. Death touches the bubble and it breaks, it drops into nothing. The cobweb, most

finely spun indeed, but more easily dislodged, is swept away in an instant; and all the abortive projects are buried in the same grave with their projector. So true is that verdict which the wisdom from above passes on these *successful unfortunates:* "they walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain."

Speak, ye that attend such a one in his last minutes; ye that heard his *expiring sentiments;* did he not cry out in the language of disappointed sensuality, "O death! how terrible is thy approach to a man immersed in secular cares, and void of all concern for the never-ending *hereafter!* Where, alas! is the profit, where the comfort of entering deep into the knowledge, and of being dexterous in the despatch of earthly affairs; since I have all the while neglected *the one thing needful!* Destructive mistake! I have been attentive to every inferior interest; I have laid myself out on the trifles of a moment; but have disregarded *heaven;* have forgot *eternal ages!* O! that my days,"—here, he was going on to breathe some fruitless wishes, or to form I know not what ineffectual resolutions: but a sudden convulsion shook his nerves; disabled his tongue; and, in less than an hour, dissolved his frame.

May the children of this world be warned by the dying words of an unhappy brother, and gather advantage from his misfortune. Why should they pant, with such impatient ardour, after *white* and *yellow* earth; as if the universe did not afford sufficient for every one to take a little? Why should they *lade* themselves with thick clay, when they are to "*run* for an incorruptible crown, and press towards the prize of their high calling?" Why should they overload the vessel, in which their everlasting ALL is embarked; or fill their arms with *su-*

perfluities, when they are to swim for their *lives*? Yet, so preposterous is the conduct of those persons, who are *all industry* to heap up an abundance of the wealth which perisheth, but are scarce so much as *faintly desirous* of being rich towards God.

O! that we may walk through all these glittering toys, at least with a wise indifference, if not with a superior disdain! Having enough for the conveniences of life, let us only *accommodate* ourselves with things below, and lay up our *treasures* in the regions above. Whereas, if we indulge an anxious concern, or lavish an inordinate care, on any transitory possessions, we shall rivet them to our affections with so firm an union, that the utmost severity of pain must attend the separating stroke. By such an eager attachment to what will certainly be ravished from us, we shall only insure to ourselves *accumulated anguish* against the agonising hour. We shall plant, aforehand, our dying pillow with thorns.

Some, I perceive, arrived at threescore years and ten before they made their exit; nay, some few resigned not their breath till they had numbered fourscore revolving harvests. These, I would hope, "remembered their Creator in the days of their youth;" before their strength became labour and sorrow; before that low ebb of languishing nature, when *the keepers of the house tremble, and those that look out of the windows are darkened:* when even the lighting down of *the grasshopper is a burden* on the bending shoulders; *and desire* itself *fails* in the listless, lethargic soul;—before those heavy hours come, and those tiresome moments draw nigh, in which there is too much reason to say, "*we have no pleasure in them;* no improvement from them.

If their lamps were unfurnished with oil, how

unfit must they be, in such decrepit circumstances, to go to the market, and buy. For besides a variety of disorders, arising from the enfeebled constitution, their corruptions must be surprisingly strengthened by such a long course of irreligion. *Evil habits* must have struck the deepest root; must have twisted themselves with every fibre of the heart; and be as thoroughly ingrained in the disposition, as the soot in the *Ethiopian's* complexion, or the spots in the leopard's skin. If such a one under such disadvantages, surmounts all the difficulties which lie in his way to glory, it must be a great and mighty salvation indeed. If such a one escapes destruction, and is saved at the last; it must, without all peradventure, be—*so as by fire.*

This is the season which stands in need of *comfort*, and is very improper to enter upon the *conflict.* The husbandman should now be putting in his sickle, or eating the fruit of his labours; not beginning to break up the ground, or scatter the seed. Nothing, 'tis true, is impossible with God, He said, *Let there be light, and there was light;* instantaneous light diffused, as quick as thought, through all the dismal dominion of primeval darkness. At his command, a leprosy of the longest continuance, and of the utmost inveteracy, departs in a moment. He can in the greatness of his strength, quicken the wretch who has lain dead in trespasses and sins, not four days only, but fourscore years. Yet trust not, O trust not, a point of such *inexpressible* importance to so dreadful an *uncertainty.* God may suspend his power; may withdraw his help; may swear, in his wrath, that such abusers of his long suffering shall "never enter into his rest."

Ye, therefore, that are *vigorous* in health, and

blooming in years, improve the precious opportunity. Improve your golden hours to the noblest of all purposes: such as may render you meet for the inheritance of saints in light; and ascertain your title to a state of immortal youth, to a crown of eternal glory. Stand not, all the prime of your day, idle: trifle no longer with the offers of this immense felicity: but make haste, and delay not the time, to keep God's commandments. While you are loitering in a *gay insensibility*, death may be bending his bow, and marking you out for speedy victims. Not long ago, I happened to spy a thoughtless *jay*. The poor bird was idly busied in dressing his pretty plumes, or hopping carelessly from spray to spray. A sportsman coming by observes the feathered rover; immediately he lifts the tube, and levels his blow. Swifter than whirlwind flies the leaden death; and in a moment, lays the silly creature breathless on the ground. Such, *such* may be the fate of the man who has a fair occasion of obtaining grace to-day, and wantonly postpones the improvement of it till to morrow. He may be cut off in the midst of his folly, and ruined *for ever* while he is dreaming of being *wise hereafter*.

Some no doubt, came to this their last retreat, *full of piety*, and *full of days;* "as a shock of corn, ripe with age and laden with plenty, cometh in in his season." These were children of light, and *wise* in their generation; wise with that exalted wisdom which cometh from above, and with that enduring wisdom which lasts to eternity. *Rich* also they were, more honourably and permanently rich, than all the votaries of Mammon. The wealth of the *one* has made itself wings, and is irrecoverably gone; while the wretched acquirers are transmitted to that place of penury and pain, where not so much

as one drop of water is allowed to cool their scorching tongues. The stores of the *other* still abide with them; will never depart from them; but make them glad for ever and ever, in the city of their God. Their treasures were such as no created power could *take away;* such as none but infinite beneficence can *bestow;* and (comfortable to consider) such as I, and every indigent longing sinnner, may *obtain;* treasures of heavenly knowledge and saving faith; treasures of atoning blood and imputed righteousness.

Here lie their bodies in "peaceable habitations, and quiet resting places." Here, they have thrown off every *burden*, and are escaped from every *snare*. The head aches no more; the eye forgets to weep; the flesh is no longer racked with acute, nor wasted with lingering distempers. Here, they receive a final release from pain, and an everlasting discharge from sorrow. Here danger never threatens them with her terrifying alarms; but *tranquility* softens their couch, and *safety* guards their repose. Rest then, ye precious relics, within this hospitable gloom Rest in gentle slumbers, till, the last trumpet shall give the welcome signal; and sound aloud, through all your silent mansions, "Arise; shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."

To these, how *calm* was the *evening* of life! In what a smiling serenity did their sun go down! When their flesh and their heart failed, how reviving was the remembrance of an all-sufficient Redeemer once dying for *their* sins, now risen again for *their* justification! How cheering the well-grounded hope of pardon for their trangressions, and peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! How did this *assuage* the agonies and *sweeten* the

bitterness of death? Where now is wealth, with all her golden mountains? Where is honour, with her proud trophies of renown? Where are all the vain pomps of a deluded world? Can they inspire *such* comfort, can they administer *any* support, in this last extremity? Can *they* compose the affrighted thoughts? or buoy up the departing soul, amidst all the pangs of dissolution? The followers of the Lamb seemed pleased and triumphant, even at their last gasp. "God's everlasting arms are underneath" their fainting heads. His Spirit whispers peace and consolation to their consciences. In the strength of these heavenly succours, they quit the field, not *captives*, but *conquerors*, with "hopes full of immortality."

And now they are gone. The struggles of reluctant nature are over. The body sleeps in death; the soul launches into the invisible state. But who can imagine the delightful surprise, when they find themselves surrounded by *guardian angels*, instead of *weeping friends?* How securely do they wing their way, and pass through unknown worlds, under the conduct of those celestial guides? The vale of tears is quite lost. Farewell, for ever, the realms of wo, and range of malignant beings! They arrive on the *frontiers* of inexpressible *felicity*. They "are come to the city of the living God:" while a voice sweeter than music in her softest strains, sweet as the harmony of hymning seraphim, congratulates their arrival, and bespeaks their admission: *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors*, that the heirs of glory may enter in.

Here, then, let us leave the spirits and souls of the righteous; escaped from an entangling *wilderness*, and received into a *paradise* of delights! es-

caped from the territories of disquietude, and settled in regions of unmolested security! Here they sit down with *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, in the kingdom of their Father. Here, they mingle with an innumerable company of angels, and rejoice around the throne of the Lamb: rejoice in the *fruition* of *present* felicity, and in the *assured expectation* of an inconceivable addition to their bliss: when God *shall call the heavens from above, and the earth, that he may judge his people.*

Fools accounted their life madness, and their end to be without honour: but they are numbered among the children of God *and their* lot, their distinguished and eternal lot, *is among the saints!* However, therefore, an undiscerning world may *despise*, and a profane world *vilify*, the truly religious; be this the supreme, the invariable desire of my heart: "Let me live the life and die the death of the righteous. Oh! let my latter end and future state be like theirs!"

What figure is that which strikes my eye from an eminent part of the wall? It is not only placed in a more *elevated situation* than the rest, but carries a more splendid and *sumptuous air* than ordinary. Swords and spears, murdering engines and instruments of slaughter, adorn the stone with a formidable magnificence.—It proves to be the monument of a noble warrior.

Is such respect, thought I, paid to the memory of this brave soldier for sacrificing his life to the *public good?* Then what honours, what immortal honours, are due to the great Captain of our Salvation? who, though Lord of the angelic legions, and supreme Commander of all the heavenly hosts, willingly offered himself a *bleeding* propitiation for *sinners!*

The one died, being a *mortal*, and only yielded up a life which was long before forfeited to divine justice: which must soon have been surrendered as a debt to nature if it had not fallen as a prey to war. But Christ took flesh and gave up the Ghost, though he was the great I Am, the fountain of existence, who calls happiness and immortality all his own. He who thought it no robbery to be *equal with God*, he whose outgoings were *from everlasting*, even he was made in the likeness of man, and cut off out of the land of the living. Wonder, O heavens! be astonished, O earth! He died the death, of whom it is witnessed, that he is "the true God and eternal life."

The one *exposed* himself to peril in the service of his *sovereign* and his *country*, which, though it was glorious to do, yet would have been ignominious in such circumstances to have declined. But Christ took the field, though he was the *blessed* and *only Potentate;* the King of kings, and Lord of lords. Christ took the field, though he was *sure* to *drop* in the engagement; and put on the harness, though he knew beforehand that it must reek with his blood. That Prince of heaven resigned his royal person, not barely to the hazard, but to the inevitable stroke; to death, certain in its approach and armed with all its horrors. And for *whom?* Not for those who were in any degree deserving, but for his *disobedient creatures*, for the pardon of condemned malefactors; for a band of rebels, a race of traitors, the most obnoxious and inexcusable of all criminals, whom he might have left to perish in their iniquities, without the least impeachment of his goodness, and to the display of his avenging justice.

The one, it is probable, died *expeditiously;* was suddenly wounded and soon slain. A bullet lodged

in his heart, a sword sheathed in his breast, or a battle axe cleaving the brain, might put a speedy end to his misery, despatch him "as in a moment;" whereas the divine Redeemer expired in tedious and protracted torments. His pangs were as *lingering* as they were *exquisite*. Even in the prelude to his last suffering, what a load of sorrows overwhelmed his sacred humanity! till the intolerable pressure wrung blood, instead of sweat, from every pore: till the crimson flood stained all his raiment and tinged the very stones. But, when the last scene of the tragedy commenced; when the executioner's hammer had nailed him to the cross; O! how many *dismal hours* did that illustrious sufferer hang, a spectacle of wo to God, to angels, and to men! His temples mangled with the thorny crown! his hands and feet cleft with the rugged irons! his whole body covered with wounds and bruises! and his soul, his very soul, pierced with pangs of unutterable distress!

So long he hung, that nature through all her dominions was thrown into sympathizing commotions. The *earth* could no longer sustain such barbarous indignities without trembling, nor the *sun* behold them without horror. Nay, so long did he hang in this extremity of agony and torture, that the alarm reached even the remote *regions* of the dead. Never, O my soul, never forget the amazing truth. The Lamb of God was seized, was bound, was slaughtered with the utmost inhumanity, and endured death in all its bitterness for thee! His murderers, studiously cruel, so guided the fatal cup, that he tasted *every drop* of its gall, before he drank it off to the *very dregs*.

Once again; the warrior died like a *hero*, and fell gallantly in the field of battle. But died not

Christ *as a fool dieth?* Not on the bed of honour, with scars of glory in his breast; but like some execrable miscreant on a *gibbet*, with the lashes of the vile scourge on his back. Yes, the blessed Jesus bowed his expiring head on the accursed tree, suspended between heaven and earth, as an outcast from both, and unworthy of either.

What suitable returns of inflamed and adoring devotion can we make to the holy one of God; thus dying, that we might live; dying in ignominy and anguish, that we might live forever in the heigths of joy, and sit for ever on thrones of glory? Alas! it is not in *us*, impotent, insensible mortals to be duly thankful. *He* only who confers such inconceivably rich favours, can enkindle a proper warmth of grateful affections. Then build thyself a *monument*, most gracious *Immanuel*, build thyself an everlasting monument of *gratitude* in our souls. Inscribe the memory of thy matchless beneficence, not with ink and pen, but with that precious *blood* which gushed from thy wounded veins. Engrave it, not with the hammer and chisel, but with that sharpened *spear* which pierced thy sacred side. Let it stand conspicuous and indelible, not on outward tables of stone, but on the very inmost *tables* of our *hearts*.

One thing more let me observe, before I bid adieu to this entombed warrior, and his garnished sepulchre. How mean are these ostentatious methods, of *bribing* the *vote* of fame, and purchasing a little posthumous renown! What a poor substitute for a set of memorable actions, is polished alabaster, or the mimickry of sculptured marble! The real excellency of this bleeding patriot is written on the minds of his countrymen; it would be remembered with applause so long as the nation subsists,

without this artificial expedient to perpetuate it. And such, such is the monument I would wish for myself. Let me leave a memorial in the breasts of my fellow creatures. Let surviving friends bear witness that I have not lived to myself alone, nor been altogether unserviceable in my generation. Oh! let an uninterrupted series of beneficient offices be the *inscription*; and the best interest of my acquaintance the *plate* that exhibits it.

Let the *poor* as they pass by my grave, point at the little spot, and thankfully acknowledge, "There lies the man, whose unwearied kindness was the constant relief of my various distresses; who tenderly visited my languishing bed, and readily supplied my indigent circumstances. How often were his counsels a guide to my perplexed thoughts, and a cordial to my dejected spirits! 'Tis owing to God's blessing, on his seasonable charities, and prudent consolations, that I now live, and live in comfort." Let a person, once *ignorant and ungodly*, lift up his eyes to heaven, and say within himself as he walks over my bones, "Here are the last remains of that sincere friend, who *watched for my soul*. I can never forget with what heedless gaiety I was posting on in the paths of perdition; and I tremble to think into what irretrievable ruin I might quickly have been plunged, had not his faithful admonitions arrested me in the wild career. I was unacquainted with the Gospel of peace, and had no concern for its unsearchable treasures; but now, enlightened by his *instructive conversation*, I see the all-sufficiency of my Saviour, and animated by his *repeated exhortations*, I count all things but loss, that I may win Christ. Methinks, his discourses, seasoned with religion, and set home by the divine Spirit, still tingle in my ears, are still

warm upon my heart; and, I trust, will be more and more operative, till we meet each other in the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

The only *infallible* way of immortalizing our characters, a way equally open to the meanest and most exalted fortune, is, "To make our calling and election sure," to gain some sweet evidence that our *names are written in heaven*. Then, however they may be disregarded or forgotten among men, they will not fail to be had in everlasting remembrance before the Lord. This is, of all distinctions, far the noblest. *Ambition*, be this the object, and every page of Scripture will sanctify thy passion; even grace itself will fan thy flame. As to earthly memorials, yet a little while, and they are all obliterated. The tongue of those, whose happiness we have zealously promoted, must soon be silent in the coffin. Characters cut with a pen of iron, and committed to the solid rock, will ere long cease to be legible. But as many as are enrolled "in the Lamb's book of life." He himself, declares, shall never be blotted out from those annals of eternity. When a flight of years has mouldered the triumphal column into dust; when the brazen statue perishes under the corroding hand of time; *those honours* still continue, still are blooming and incorruptible in the world of glory.

Make the extended skies your tomb;
Let stars record your worth:
Yet know, vain mortals, all must die,
As nature's *sickliest birth*.

Would bounteous Heaven indulge my prayer,
I frame a nobler choice;
Nor, living, wish the pompous pile;
Nor, dead, regret the loss.

In thy fair *book of life* divine,
My God, inscribe my name :
There let it fill some humble place
Beneath the slaughter'd Lamb.

Thy saints, while ages roll away
In endless fame survive ;
Their glories o'er the wrongs of time
Greatly triumphant, live.

Yonder entrance leads, I suppose, to the *vault*. Let me turn aside, and take one view of the habitation, and its tenants. The sullen *door* grates upon its hinges : not used to receive many visitants, it admits me with reluctance and murmurs. What meaneth this *sudden trepidation*, while I descend the steps, and am visiting the pale nations of the dead ? Be composed, my spirits ; there is nothing to fear in these quiet chambers. "Here, even the wicked cease from troubling."

Good Heavens ! what a solemn scene ! How dismal the *gloom !* Here is perpetual darkness, and night even at noon-day. How doleful the *solitude !* Not one trace of cheerful society ; but sorrow and terror seem to have made this their dreaded abode. Hark ! how the hollow dome resounds at every tread. The *echoes* that long have slept, are awakened ; and lament, and sigh along the walls.

A beam or two finds its way through the grates, and effects a feeble glimmer from the nails of the *coffins*. So many of those sad spectacles, half concealed in shades, half seen dimly by the baneful twilight, add a deeper horror to these gloomy mansions. I pore upon the inscriptions, and am just able to pick out, that these are the remains of the rich and renowned. No vulgar dead are deposited here. The *most illustrious and right honourable* have claimed this for their last retreat : and, indeed,

they retain somewhat of a shadowy pre-eminence. They lie, ranged in mournful order, and in a sort of silent pomp, under the arches of an ample sepulchre; while mean corpses, without much ceremony, "go down to the stones of the pit."

My apprehensions recover from their surprise. I find here are no phantoms, but such as fear raises. However, it still amazes me to observe the wonders of this nether world. Those who received vast revenues, and called whole lordships their own, are here reduced to half a dozen feet of earth, or confined in a few *sheets* of *lead*. Rooms of state and sumptuous furniture are resigned, for no other ornament than the shroud, for no other apartment than the darksome *niche*. Where is the star that blazed upon the breast, or coronet that glittered round the temples? The only remains of departed dignity are, the weather-beaten hatchment and the tattered escutcheon. I see no splendid retinue surrounding this solitary dwelling. The lordly equipage hovers no longer about the lifeless master. He has no other attendant than a dusty *statue*, which, while the regardless world is as gay as ever, the sculptor's hand has taught to weep.

Those who gloried in high-born ancestors and *noble pedigree*, here drop their lofty pretensions. They acknowledge kindred with creeping things, and *quarter arms* with the meanest reptiles. *They say to corruption, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister.* Or, should they still assume the style of distinction, ah! how impotent were the claim! how apparent the ostentation! Is it said by their monument, "Here lies the great?" How easily is it replied by the spectator!

——False marble! where?
Nothing but poor and sordid dust lies here.

Mortifying truth! Sufficient, one would think, to wean the most sanguine appetite from this transitory state of things; from its sickly satisfactions, its fading glories, its vanishing treasures:

For now ye *lying vanities* of life!
Ye ever-tempting, ever-cheating train!
Where are ye now? And what is your amount?

What is all the world to these poor breathless beings? What are their *pleasures?* A bubble broke. What their *honours?* A dream that is forgotten. What the sum total of their *enjoyments* below? Once, perhaps, it appeared, to inexperienced and fond desire, something considerable; but now death has measured it with his line and weighed it in his scale, what is the upshot? Alas! it is shorter than a span; lighter than the dancing spark; and driven away like the dissolving smoke.

Indulge, my soul, a serious pause. Recollect all the *gay things* that were wont to dazzle thy eyes and inveigle thy affections. Here examine those baits of sense; here form an estimate of their *real value.* Suppose thyself first among the favourites of fortune, who revel in the lap of pleasure, who shine in the robes of honour, and swim in tides of inexhausted riches. Yet, how soon will the passing bell proclaim thy exit! And, when once that iron call has summoned thee to thy future reckoning, where would all these gratifications be? At that period, how will all the pageantry of the most affluent, splendid, or luxurious circumstances, vanish into empty air! And, is *this* a happiness so passionately to be coveted?

I thank you, ye relics of sounding titles and magnificent names. Ye have taught me more of the littleness of the world than all the volumes of my library. Your nobility arrayed in a winding-sheet, your grandeur mouldering in an urn, are the most indisputable proofs of the *nothingness* of created things. Never, surely, did Providence write this important point in such legible characters, as in the ashes of *my lord* or on the corpse of *his grace*. Let others, if they please, pay their obsequious court to your wealthy sons, and ignobly fawn, or anxiously sue, for preferments: my thoughts shall often resort, in pensive comtemplation, to the sepulchres of their sires; and learn, from their sleeping dust—to *moderate* my expectations from mortals, to stand *disengaged* from every undue attachment to the little interests of time, to get above the delusive amusements of honour, the gaudy tinsels of wealth, and all the empty sdadows of a perishing world.

Hark! what *sound* is that? In such a situation every noise alarms. Solemn and slow, it breaks again upon the silent air. 'Tis the striking of the clock; designed, one would imagine, to ratify all my serious meditations. Methinks it says *Amen*, and sets a seal to every improving hint. It tells me, that another portion of my appointed time is elapsed. One calls it, "the knell of my departed hours." 'Tis the watchword to vigilance and activity. It cries in the ear of reason, "Redeem the time. Catch the favourable *gales* of *opportunity*· O! catch them, while they breathe; before they are irrecoverably lost. The span of life shortens continually. Thy minutes are all upon the wing, and hastening to be gone. Thou art a borderer upon eternity, and making incessant advances to the

state thou art contemplating." May the admonition sink deep into an attentive and obedient mind! May it teach me that *heavenly arithmetic*, of "numbering my days, and applying my heart unto wisdom!"

I have often walked beneath the impending promontory's craggy cliff; I have sometimes trod the vast spaces of the lonely desert, and penetrated the inmost recesses of the dreary cavern: but never, never beheld nature louring with so *tremendous* a form; never felt such impressions of *awe* striking cold on my heart, as under these black-browed arches, amidst these mouldy walls, and surrounded by such rueful objects; where melancholy, deepest melancholy, for ever spreads her raven wings! Let me now emerge from the damp and dreadful obscurity! Farewell, ye seats of desolation, and shades of death! Gladly I revisit the realms of day,

Having cast a *superficial* view upon these receptacles of the dead, curiosity prompts my inquiry to a more *intimate* survey. Could we draw back the covering of the tomb; could we discern what those are now who once were mortals—Oh! how would it surprise and grieve us! —*surprise* us, to behold the prodigious transformation which has taken place on every individual; *grieve* us, to observe the dishonour done to our nature in general within these subterraneous lodgements!

Here, the sweet and winning *aspect*, that wore perpetually an attractive smile, grins horribly a naked ghastly skull. The *eye* that outshone the diamond's brilliancy, and glanced its lovely lightning into the most guarded heart: alas! where is it? Where shall we find the rolling sparkler? How are all its sprightly beams eclipsed, totally eclipsed! The *tongue*, that once commanded all the power of

eloquence, in this strange land has "forgot its cunning." Where are now those strains of harmony, which ravished our ears? Where is that flow of persuasion, which carried captive our judgments? The great master of language and of song is become silent as the night that surrounds him. The pampered *flesh*, so lately clothed in purple and fine linen, how is it covered rudely with clods of clay! There was a time, when the timorously nice creature would scarce "adventure to set a foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness," but is now enwrapped in clammy earth, and sleeps on no softer a pillow than the ragged gravel-stones. Here, "the *strong men* bow themselves." The nervous arm is unstrung; the brawny sinews are relaxed; the limbs, not long ago the seats of vigour and activity, lie down motionless; and the bones, which were as bars of iron, are crumbled into dust.

Here, the *man of business* forgets all his favourite schemes, and discontinues the pursuit of gain. Here, is a total stand to the circulation of merchandise and the hurry of trade. In these solitary recesses, as in the building of *Solomon's* temple, is heard no sound of the hammer and axe. The winding-sheet and the coffin are the utmost bound of all earthly devices. "Hitherto may they go, but no farther." Here, the *sons of pleasure* take a final farewell of their dear delights. No more is the sensualist anointed with oil, or crowned with rose-buds. He chants no more to the melody of the viol, nor revels any longer at the banquet of wine. Instead of sumptuous tables and delicious treats, the poor voluptuary is himself a feast for fattened insects; the reptile riots in his flesh; "the worm feeds sweetly on him." Here also *beauty* fails; bright beauty drops her lustre here. O! how her roses fade,

and her lilies languish, in this bleak soil! How does the grand leveller pour contempt upon the charmer of our hearts! How turn to deformity what captivated the world before!

Could the *lover* have a sight of his once enchanting fair one, what a startling astonishment would seize him! "Is this the object I not long ago so passionately admired? I said, she was divinely fair and thought her somewhat more than mortal. Her form was symmetry itself; every elegance breathed in her air; and all the Graces waited on her motions. 'Twas music when she spoke; but, when she spoke encouragement, 'twas little less than rapture. How my heart danced to those charming accents! And can that which, some weeks ago, was to admiration *lovely*, be now so insufferably *loathsome?* Where are those blushing cheeks? where the coral lips? where that ivory neck, on which the curling jet in such glossy ringlets flowed? with a thousand other beauties of person, and ten thousand delicacies of action? Amazing alteration! Delusory bliss! Fondly I gazed upon the glittering *meteor*. It shone brightly; and I mistook it for a *star;* for a permanent and substantial good. But how is it fallen! fallen from an orb, not its own! And all that I can trace on earth, is but a *putrid mass.*"

Lie, poor *Florella!* lie deep, as thou dost, in obscure darkness. Let night, with her impenetrable shades, always conceal thee. May no prying eye be witness to thy disgrace: but let thy *surviving sisters* think upon thy state, when they contemplate the idol in the glass. When the pleasing image rises gracefully to view, surrounded with a world of charms, and flushed with joy at the consciousness of them all; then, in those minutes of

temptation and danger, when vanity uses to steal into the thoughts—then, let them remember what a *veil of horror* is drawn over the face, which was once beautiful and brilliant as theirs. Such a seasonable reflection might regulate the labours of the toilet, and create a more earnest solicitude to polish the *jewel* than to varnish the *casket*. It might then become their highest ambition to have the mind decked with divine virtues, and dressed after the amiable pattern of their Redeemer's holiness.

And would this prejudice their person, or depreciate their charms? Quite the reverse. It would spread a sort of heavenly glory over the finest *set of features*, and heighten the loveliness of every other engaging accomplishment. What is yet a more inviting consideration, these flowers would not wither with nature, nor be tarnished by time; but would open continually into richer beauties, and *flourish* even in the *winter* of age. But the most incomparable recommended of these noble qualities is, that from their hallowed relics, as from the fragrant ashes of the *phœnix*, will ere long arise an illustrious form, bright as the wings of angels, lasting as the light of the new *Jerusalem*.

For my part the remembrance of this sad revolution shall make me *ashamed* to pay my devotion to a shrine of perishing flesh, and *afraid* to expect all my happiness from so brittle a joy. It shall teach me not to think too highly of well-proportioned clay, though formed in the most elegant mould, and animated with the sweetest soul. 'Tis Heaven's last, best, and crowning gift, to be received with *gratitude*, and cherished with love, as a most valuable blessing; not worshipped with the incense of flattery and strains of fulsome adoration, as a goddess. It will cure, I trust, the *dotage* of my *eyes*;

and incline me always to prefer the substantial "ornaments of a meek and virtuous spirit," before the transient decorations of white and red on the skin.

Here I called in my roving meditations from their long excursion on this tender subject. Fancy listened a while to the soliloquy of a lover. Now judgment resumes the reins, and guides my thoughts to more near and self-interesting inquiries. However, upon a review of the whole scene, crowded with *spectacles* of *mortality* and *trophies* of *death*, I could not forbear smiting my breast, and fetching a sigh, and lamenting over the noblest of all visible beings, laid prostrate under the feet of "the pale horse and his rider." I could not forbear repeating that pathetic exclamation, "*O! thou Adam, what hast thou done?*" What desolation has thy disobedience wrought in the earth! See the malignity, the ruinous malignity, of *sin!* Sin has demolished so many stately structures of flesh: sin has made such havoc among the most excellent ranks of God's lower creation: and sin (that deadly bane of our nature) would have plunged our better part into the execrable horrors of the nethermost hell, had not our merciful Mediator interposed, and given himself for our ransom. Therefore what grateful acknowledgements does the whole world of *penitent* sinners owe; what ardent returns of love will a whole heaven of *glorified* believers pay, to such a friend, benefactor and deliverer!

Musing upon these melancholy objects, a faithful remembrancer suggests from within—"Must this sad change succeed in me also? Am I to draw my last gasp; to become a breathless corpse; and *be*, what I *deplore?* Is there a time approaching, when this body shall be carried out upon the bier, and consigned to its clay-cold bed? While some kind

acquaintance, perhaps, may drop one parting tear, and cry, Alas, my brother!" Is the time approaching? Nothing is more certain; a decree, much surer than the law of the *Medes* and *Persians*, has irrevocably determined the doom.

Should one of these ghastly figures burst from his confinement, and start up in frightly deformity before me—should the *haggard skeleton* lift a clattering hand, and point it full in my view—should it open the stiffened jaws, and with a hoarse tremendous murmur break this profound silence—should it accost *me*, as *Samuel's* apparition addressed the trembling king, "*The* Lord *shall deliver* thee *also into the hands of death; yet a little while and* thou *shalt be with me.*"—The *solemn warning*, delivered in so striking a manner, must strongly impress my imagination. A message in thunder would scarce sink deeper. Yet, there is abundantly greater reason to be alarmed by that express declaration of the Lord God Almighty, "*Thou shalt surely die.*" Well then, since sentence is passed, since I am a condemned man, and know not when the dead warrant may arrive; let me die to *sin*, and die to the *world*, before I die beneath the stroke of a righteous God. Let me employ the little uncertain interval of respite from execution, in preparing for a happier state and a better life; that when the fatal moment comes, and I am commanded to shut my eyes upon all things here below, I may open them again to see my Saviour in the mansions above.

Since this body, which is so fearfully and wonderfully made, must fall to pieces in the grave; since I must soon resign all my bodily powers to darkness, inactivity, and corruption, let it be my constant care to use them well while I possess them! Let my *hands* be stretched forth to relieve the nee-

dy, and always be more "ready to give than to receive." Let my *knees* bend in deepest humiliation before the throne of grace, while my eyes are cast down to the earth in penitential confusion, or devoutly looking up to heaven for pardoning mercy! In every friendly interview, let the "law of kindness dwell on my *lips;*" or rather, if the seriousness of my acquaintance permits, let the gospel of peace flow from my tongue. O! that I might be enabled, in every public concourse, to lift up my voice like a trumpet, and pour abroad a more joyful sound than its most melodious accents, in proclaiming the glad tidings of free salvation! Be shut, my *ears*, resolutely shut, against the malevolent whispers of slander, and the contagious breath of filthy talking. But be swift to hear the instructions of wisdom; be all attention when your Redeemer speaks; imbibe the precious truths; and convey them carefully to the heart. Carry me, my *feet*, to the temple of the Lord, to the beds of the sick, and houses of the poor. May all my members, devoted entirely to my divine Master, be the willing instruments of promoting his glory!

Then, ye embalmers, ye may spare your pains. These works of faith and labours of love, these shall be my *spices* and *perfumes*. Enwrapped in these, I would lay me gently down, and sleep sweetly in the blessed Jesus; hoping that God will "give commandment concerning my bones," and one day fetch them up from the dust, as silver from the furnace, purified "I say not seven times, but seventy times seven."

Here my contemplation took wing, and in an instant alighted in the garden, adjoining to Mount *Calvary*. Having viewed the abode of my deceased fellow-creatures, methought I longed to see the

place where our Lord lay. And, O! what a marvellous spectacle was once exhibited in this memorable sepulchre! *He*, "who clothes himself with light as with a garment, and walks upon the wings of the wind; He was pleased to wear the habiliments of *mortality*, and dwell among the *prostrate* dead. Who can repeat the wondrous truth too often? Who can dwell upon the transporting theme too long? He, who sits enthroned in glory, and diffuses bliss among all the heavenly hosts; He, was once a pale and bloody corpse, and pressed this little spot.

O death! how great was thy triumph in that hour! Never did thy gloomy realms contain *such* a prisoner before. *Prisoner*, Did I say? No; He was more than conqueror. He arose, far more mightily than *Sampson*, from a transient slumber; broke down the gates, and demolished the strong-holds of those dark dominions. And this, O mortals, this is your only *consolation* and *security*. Jesus has trod the dreadful path, and smoothed it for your passage. Jesus, sleeping in the chambers of the tomb, has brightened the dismal mansion, and left an inviting odour in those beds of dust. The dying Jesus! (never let the comfortable truth depart from your minds! the dying Jesus) is your sure *protection*, your unquestionable *passport* through the territories of the grave. Believe in Him, and they shall prove "a highway to *Sion*;" shall transmit you safe to Paradise. Believe in Him, and you shall be no losers but unspeakable gainers, by your dissolution. For hear what the oracle of heaven says upon this important point: *Whoso believeth in Me, shall never die.* What sublime and emphatical language is this! This much, at least, it must import—The nature of that last change shall "be surprisingly

altered for the better; it shall no longer be *inflicted* as a punishment, but rather be *vouchsafed* as a blessing. To such persons it shall come attended with such a train of benefits, as will render it a kind of happy impropriety to call it dying. Dying! No; 'tis then they *truly* begin to *live*. Their exit is the end of their frailty and their entrance upon perfection. Their last groan is the prelude to life and immortality."

O ye timorous souls, that are terrified at the sound of the passing-bell, that turn pale at the sight of an opened grave, and can scarce behold a coffin or a skull without a shuddering horror; ye that are *in bondage* to the grisly tyrant, and tremble at the shaking of his iron rod; cry mightily to the Father of your spirits, for faith in his dear Son. Faith will free you from your slavery. Faith will embolden you to tread on (this fiercest of) serpents. Old *Simeon*, clasping the child Jesus in the arms of his flesh, and the glorious Mediator in the arms of his faith, departs with tranquility and peace. That bitter persecutor *Saul*, having won Christ, being found in Christ, longs to be dismissed from cumbrous clay, and kindles into rapture at the prospect of dissolution. Methinks I see another of Immanuel's followers, trusting, in his Saviour, leaning on his Beloved, go down to the silent shades with composure and alacrity. In this powerful name an innumerable company of sinful creatures have set up their banners, and "overcome, through the blood of the Lamb." Authorized by the Captain of thy salvation, *thou* also mayst set thy feet upon the neck of this king of terrors. Furnished with this antidote *thou* also mayst play around the hole of the asp, and put thy undaunted hand on this cockatrice-den. Thou mayst feel the viper fastening to thy

mortal part, and *fear* no *evil*: thou shalt one day shake it off by a joyful resurrection, and *suffer* no *harm*.

Resurrection? That cheering word eases my mind of an anxious thought, and solves a most momentous question. I was going to ask, "wherefore do all these corpses lie here, in this abject condition? Is this their final state? Has death conquered, and will the tyrant hold captivity captive? How long wilt thou forget them, O Lord? for ever?" No, saith the voice from heaven, the word of divine revelation; *the righteous* are all *prisoners of hope*. There is an hour (an awful secret that, and known only to all-foreseeing Wisdom,) an appointed hour there is, when an act of grace will pass the great seal above, and give them an universal discharge, a general delivery from the abodes of corruption. Then shall the Lord Jesus descend from heaven, with the shout of the archangel and the trump of God. *Destruction* itself shall hear his call, and the obedient *grave* give up her dead. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, they shake off the sleep of ten thousand years, and spring forth, like the bounding roe, "to meet their Lord in the air."

And O! with what cordial congratulations, what transporting endearments, do the soul and body, those affectionate companions, re-unite! But with how much greater demonstrations of kindness are they both received by their compassionate Redeemer! The Ancient of days, who comes in the clouds of heaven, is their friend, their father, their bridegroom. He comes with irresistable power and infinite glory, but they have nothing to fear from his majestic appearance. Those *tremendous solemnities*, which spread desolation and astonishment through the universe, serve only to inflame their

love, and heighten their hopes. The Judge, the awful Judge, amidst all his magnificence and splendour, vouchsafes to confess their names, vouchsafes to commemorate their fidelity, before all the inhabitants of the skies, and the whole assembled world.

Hark! the thunders are hushed. See! the lightnings cease their rage. The angelic armies stand in silent suspense. The whole race of *Adam* is wrapped in pleasing or anxious expectation. And now, that adorable Person, whose favour is better than life, whose acceptance is a crown of glory, lifts up the light of his countenance upon the righteous; he speaks, and what ravishing words proceed from his gracious lips! what ecstacies of delight they enkindle in the breasts of the faithful! "I accept you, O my people! Ye are they that believe in my name. Ye are they that renounced *yourselves*, and *are complete in me*. I see no spot or blemish in you, for ye are washed in my blood and clothed with my righteousness. Renewed by my Spirit, ye have glorified me on earth, and have been faithful unto death. Come then, ye servants of holiness, enter into the joy of your Lord. Come, ye children of light, ye blessed of my Father, receive the *kingdom* that shall never be removed, wear the *crown* which fadeth not away, and enjoy *pleasures* for evermore!"

Then, it will be one of the smallest privileges of the righteous, that they shall languish no more; that sickness will never again show her pale countenance in their dwellings. *Death itself* will be "swallowed up in victory." That fatal javelin, which has drank the blood of monarchs, and finds its way to the hearts of all the sons of *Adam*, shall be utterly broken. That enormous scythe, which has struck empires from their root, and swept ages

and generations into oblivion, shall lie by in perpetual uselesness. *Sin* also, which filled thy quiver, thou insatiate archer!—sin, which strung thy arm with resistless vigour; which pointed all thy shafts with inevitable destruction—sin will then be done away. Whatever is *frail* or *depraved* will be thrown off with our grave clothes. All to come is perfect holiness, and consummate happiness, the term of whose continuance is eternity.

O eternity! eternity! how are our boldest, our strongest thoughts, lost and overwhelmed in thee! Who can set landmarks to limit thy dimensions, or find plummets to fathom thy depths? *Arithmeticians* have figures to compute all the progressions of time; *astronomers* have instruments to calculate the distances of the planets; but what numbers can state, what lines can guage, the lengths and breadths of eternity? "It is higher than heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? the measure thereof is longer than the earth, broader than the sea."

Mysterious, mighty existence! a sum not to be lessened by the largest *deductions!* an extent not to be contracted by all possible *diminutions!* None can truly say, after the most prodigious waste of ages, "So much of eternity is gone;" for, when millions of centuries are elapsed, it is but just commencing; and, when millions more have run their ample round, it will be no nearer ending. Yea, when ages numerous as the bloom of spring, increased by the herbage of summer, both augmented by the leaves of autumn, and all multiplied by the drops of rain which drown the winter—when these, and ten thousand times ten thousand more—more than can be represented by any similitude, or imagined by any conception—when all these are revolved

and finished, eternity, vast, boundless, amazing eternity, will *only* be *beginning !*

What a pleasing, yet awful thought is this ! full of delight, and full of dread. O ! may it alarm our *fears*, quicken our *hopes*, and animate all our *endeavours !* Since we are soon to launch into this endless and inconceivable state, let us give all diligence to secure our entrance into bliss. *Now*, let us give all diligence because there is no alteration in the scenes of futurity. The wheel never turns : all is steadfast and immovable beyond the grave. Whether we are then seated on the throne, or stretched on the rack ; a seal will be set to our condition by the hand of everlasting mercy or inflexible justice. The *saints* always rejoice amidst the smiles of Heaven ! their harps are perpetually tuned ; their triumphs admit of no interruption. The ruin of the *wicked* is irremidiable. The fatal sentence, once passed, is never to be repealed. No hope of exchanging their doleful habitations ; but all things bear the same dismal aspect for ever and ever.

The *wicked !* my mind recoils at the apprehension of their misery. It has studiously waved the fearful subject, and seems unwilling to pursue it, even now. But 'tis better to reflect upon it for a few minutes, than to endure it to eternal ages. Perhaps the consideration of their aggravated misery may be *profitably terrible ;* may teach me more highly to prize the Saviour, who " delivers from going down into the bottomless pit ;" may drive me, like the avenger's sword, to this only city of refuge for obnoxious sinners.

The wicked seem to lie here, like malefactors, in a deep and strong dungeon, reserved against the day of trial. " *Their departure* was without peace,"

Clouds of horror sat louring upon their closing eyelids, most sadly foreboding the "blackness of darkness for ever." When the last sickness seized their frame, and the inevitable change advanced; when they saw the fatal arrow fitting to the strings, saw the deadly archer aiming at their heart, and felt the envenomed shaft fastened in their vitals—good God! what fearfulness came upon them! What horrible dread overwhelmed them! How did they stand shuddering and aghast upon the tremendous precipice! excessively afraid to plunge into the abyss of eternity, yet utterly unable to maintain their standing to the verge of life.

O! what pale reviews, what startling prospects conspire to augment their sorrow! They look *backward*, and behold! a most melancholy scene! sins unrepented of; mercy slighted; and the day of grace ending? They look *forward*, and nothing presents itself but the righteous Judge; the dreadful tribunal; and a most solemn reckoning. They roll *around* their affrighted eyes on attending friends. If accomplices in debauchery, it sharpens their anguish to consider this farther aggravation of their guilt, that they have not sinned alone, but drawn others into the snare. If religious acquaintance, it strikes a fresh gash into their hearts, to think of never seeing them any more, but only at an unapproachable distance, separated by the unpassable gulf.

At last, perhaps, they begin to *pray*. Finding no other possible way of relief, they are constrained to apply unto the Almighty. With trembling lips and a faltering tongue they cry unto that sovereign Being, "who kills and makes alive." But why have they *deferred*, so long deferred, their addresses to God? Why have they *despised* all his

counsels, and stood incorrigible under his incessant reproofs? How often have they been forewarned of these terrors, and most importunately entreated to *seek the Lord while he might be found*? I wish they may obtain mercy at the eleventh, at the last hour. I wish they may be snatched from the jaws, the opened, the gaping, the almost closing jaws of damnation. But, alas! who can tell whether affronted Majesty will lend an ear to their complaint? whether the Holy One will work a miracle of grace in behalf of such trangressors? He may, for aught any mortal knows, "laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh."

Thus they lie, groaning out the poor remains of life; their limbs bathed in sweat; their hearts struggling with convulsive throes; pains insupportable throbbing in every pulse; and innumerable darts of agony transfixing their conscience.

In that dread moment how the frantic soul
Raves round the walls of her clay tenement;
Runs to each avenue; and shrieks for help
But shrieks in vain! How wishfully she looks
On all she's leaving, now no longer hers!
A little longer, yet a little longer,
O! might she stay, to wash away her crimes,
And fit her for her passage! Mournful sight!
Her very eyes weep blood; and every groan
She heaves, is big with horror; but the foe,
Like a staunch murderer, steady to his purpose,
Pursues her close through every lane of life,
Nor misses once the track; but presses on;
Till, forced at last to the tremendous verge,
At once she sinks.—

If *this* be the *end* of the ungodly, "my soul, come not thou into their secret! unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united!" How awfully accomplished is that prediction of inspired wisdom!

Sin, though seemingly sweet in the commission, *yet at the last it biteth like a serpent*, and *stingeth like an adder*. Fly, therefore, from the tents, O! fly from the ways, of such wretched men.

Happy dissolution! were this the period of their woes. But, alas! all these tribulations are only *the beginning of sorrows;* a small drop only from that "cup of trembling," which is mingled for their future portion. No sooner has the last pang dislodged their reluctant souls, but they are hurried into the presence of an injured angry God; not under the conducting care of beneficent angels, but exposed to the insults of accursed spirits, who lately *tempted* them, now *upbraid* them, and will for ever *torment* them. Who can imagine their confusion and distress, when they stand guilty and inexcusable before their incensed Creator? They are received with frowns. The God that made them has no "mercy on them." The Prince of Peace rejects them with abhorrence. He consigns them over to chains of *darkness* and receptacles of *despair*, against the severer doom and more public infamy of the great day. Then, all the vials of wrath will be emptied upon these wretched creatures. The law they have violated, and the Gospel they have slighted; the power they have defied, and the goodness they have abused; will all get themselves honour in their exemplary destruction. Then God, the God to whom vengeance belongeth, will draw the arrow to the very head, and set them as the mark of his inexorable displeasure.

Resurrection will be no privilege to them; but immortality itself their everlasting curse. Would they not bless the grave, "that land where all things are forgotten," and wish to lie eternally hid in the deepest gloom! But the dust refuses to *con-*

ceal their persons, or to draw a *veil* over their practices. They also must awake; must arise; must appear at the bar, and meet the Judge; a Judge, before whom "the pillars of heaven tremble, and the earth melts away;" a Judge, once long-suffering and very compassionate, but now unalterably determined to teach stubborn offenders what it is to *provoke* the Omnipotent Godhead; what it is to *trample* upon the blood of his Son, and offer *despite* to all the gracious overtures of his Spirit.

O! the perplexity! the distraction, that must seize the impenitent rebels when they are summoned to the great tribunal! What will they do in this day of severe visitation, this day of final decision? Where? how? whence can they find help? To which of the saints will they turn? Whither betake themselves for shelter or for succour? Alas! 'tis all in vain! 'tis all too late. Friends and acquaintance know them no more; men and angels abandon them to their approaching doom; even the Mediator, the Mediator himself, deserts them in this dreadful hour. To *fly*, will be impracticable; to *justify* themselves, still more impossible; and now to make any *supplications*, utterly unavailable.

Behold! the books are opened; the secrets of all hearts are disclosed; the hidden things of darkness are brought to light. How empty, how ineffectual *now*, are all those refined *artifices*, with which hypocrites imposed upon their fellow-creatures, and preserved a character in the sight of men! The jealous God, who has been about their path, and about their bed, and 'spied out all their ways, sets before them all the things that they have done They cannot answer him one in a thousand, nor stand in the awful judgment. *The heavens reveal*

their iniquities, and the earth rises up against them. They are *speechless* with guilt, and *stigmatized* with infamy before all the armies of the sky and all the nations of the redeemed. What a favour would they esteem it, to hide their ashamed heads in the bottom of the ocean, or even to be buried beneath the ruins of the tottering world!

If the contempt poured upon them be thus insupportable, how will their hearts endure, when the *sword* of infinite indignation is unsheathed, and fiercely waved around their defenceless heads, or pointed directly at their naked breasts! How must the wretches scream with wild amazement, and rend the very heavens, with their cries, when the *right-aiming thunderbolts* go abroad!—go abroad with a dreadful commision to drive them from the kingdoms of glory, and plunge them, not into the sorrows of a moment, or the tortures of an hour, but into all the restless agonies of unquenchable fire and everlasting despair.

Misery of miseries! too shocking for reflection to dwell upon. But if so dismal to *forsee*, and that at a distance, together with some comfortable expectation of escaping it, O! how bitter, inconceivably bitter, to *bear*, without any intermission, or any mitigation, through hopeless and eternal ages!

Who has any bowels of pity? Who has any sentiments of compassion? Who has any tender concern for his fellow-creatures? Who?—in God's name and for Christ's sake let him show it, by warning every man, and beseeching every man, to *seek* the Lord while he may be *found*, to throw down the arms of rebellion before the act of indemnity expires, submissively to adore the Lamb, while he holds out the golden sceptre. Here, let us act the friendly part to mankind; here, let the whole force

of our *benevolence* exert itself, in exorting relations, acquaintance, neighbours, whomsoever we may probably influence, to take the wings of *faith* unfeigned, of *repentance* undelayed, and flee away from this wrath to come.

Upon the whole, what stupendous discoveries are these! Lay them up in a faithful remembrance, O my soul; recollect them with the most serious attention, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; when thou walkest, receive them for thy *companions;* when thou talkest, listen to them as thy *prompters;* and whatever thou doest, consult them as thy *directors.* Influenced by these considerations, thy views will greaten, the affections be exalted, and thou thyself raised above the tantalizing power of perishing things. Duly mindful of these, it will be the sum of thy *desires* and the scope of thy *endeavours*, to gain the approbation of that Sovereign Being who will then fill the throne and pronounce the decisive sentence; thou wilt see nothing worth a wish, in comparison of having his will for thy rule, his glory for thy aim, and his Holy Spirit for thy ever actuating principle.

Wonder O man; be lost in admiration at those *prodigious events* which are coming upon the universe; events, the greatness of which nothing finite can measure; such as will cause whatever is considerable or momentous in the annals of all generations to sink into littleness and nothing; events (Jesus prepare us for their approach, defend us when they take place!) big with the everlasting fates of all the living and the dead. I must see the graves cleaving, the sea teeming, and swarms unsuspected, crowds unnumbered, yea, multitudes of *thronging nations*, rising from both: I must see the world in flames, must stand at the dissolution of all terres-

trial things, and be an attendant on the *burial* of nature; I must see the vast expanse of the sky wrapt up like a scroll, and the incarnate God issuing forth from light inaccessible, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels, to judge both *men* and *devils:* I must see the curtain of time drop, see all eternity disclosed to view, and enter upon a *state* of being that will never, never have an end.

And ought I not (let the vainest imagination determine, ought I not) to try the sincerity of my faith, and take heed to my ways? Is there an *inquiry*, is there a *care*, of greater, of equal, of comparable importance? Is not this an infinitely pressing call, to see that my loins are girded about, my lamp trimmed, and myself dressed for the bridegroom's appearance? that, washed in the fountain opened in my Saviour's side, and clad with the marriage-garment, wove by his obedience, I may be found in peace, unblameable, and unreprovable. Otherwise, how shall I stand with boldness when the stars of heaven fall from their orbs? How shall I come forth *erect* and *courageous*, when the *earth* itself *reels* to and fro like a drunkard? How shall I look up with joy, and see my salvation drawing nigh when the hearts of millions and millions fail for fear?

Now, madam, lest my meditations set in a cloud, and leave any unpleasing gloom upon your mind, let me once more turn to the *brightening prospects* of the righteous. A view of them and their delightful expectations may serve to exhilirate the thoughts which have been musing upon melancholy subjects, and hovering about the edges of infernal darkness; just as a spacious field, arrayed in *cheerful green*, relieves and reinvigorates the eye which has fa-

tigued itself by poring upon some minute, or gazing upon some glaring object.

The righteous seem to lie by, in the bosom of the earth, as a *weary pilot* in some well-sheltered creek, till all the storms which infest this lower world are blown over: here they enjoy safe anchorage, are in no danger of *foundering* amidst the waves of prevailing iniquity, or of being *shipwrecked* on the rocks of any powerful temptation. But ere long we shall behold them hoisting their flag of hope, riding before a sweet gale of atoning merit and redeeming love; till they make, with all the sails of an assured faith, the blessed port of eternal life.

Then, may the honoured friend to whom I am writing, rich in good works, rich in heavenly tempers, but inexpressibly richer in her Saviour's righteousness, O! may she enter the harbour, like a gallant *stately vessel*, returned successful and victorious from some grand expedition, with acclamations, honour, and joy! while my *little bark*, attendant on the solemnity, and a partaker of the triumph, glides humbly after, and both rest together in the haven, the wished-for, blissful haven, of perfect security and everlasting repose.

REFLECTIONS

ON

A FLOWER-GARDEN.

I look upon the pleasure, which we take in a *Garden*, as one of the most innocent delights in human life. A *Garden* was the habitation of our first parents before the fall. It is naturally apt to fill the mind with calmness and tranquility, and to lay all its turbulent passions at rest. It gives us a great insight into the contrivance and wisdom of Providence and *suggests innumerable subjects of meditation.*

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REFLECTIONS

ON

A FLOWER-GARDEN.

IN A LETTER TO A LADY.

MADAM,

SOME time ago, my meditatations took a turn among the *tombs:* they visited the awful and melancholy mansions of the dead; and you was pleased to favour them with your attention. May I now beg the honour of your company in a more inviting and delightful excursion?—in a beautiful *flower-garden*, where I lately walked, and at once regaled the sense, and indulged the fancy.

It was early in a *summer morning*, when the air was cool, the earth moist, the whole face of the creation fresh and gay. The noisy world was scarce awake: *business* had not quite shook off his sound sleep, and *riot* had but just reclined his giddy head. All was serene, all was still; every thing tended to inspire tranquility of mind, and invite to serious thought.

Only the wakeful lark had left her nest, and was mounting on high to salute the opening day. Elevated in air, she seemed to call the laborious husbandman to his toil, and all her fellow-songsters to their notes. Earliest of birds, said I, companion of the dawn, may I always rise at thy voice! rise to offer the matin-song, and adore that beneficent

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Being, "who maketh the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice."

How charming to rove abroad at this sweet *hour* of *prime*, to enjoy the calm of nature, to tread the dewy lawns, and taste the unrifled freshness of the air!

> Sweet is the breath of morn, her rising sweet,
> With charm of earliest birds.

What a pleasure do the sons of *sloth* lose! Little, ah! little is the sluggard sensible how delicious an entertainment he foregoes, for the poorest of all animal gratifications.

The grayness of the dawn decays gradually. Abundance of ruddy streaks tinge the fleeces of the firmament, till at length the *dappled* aspect of the east is lost in one ardent and boundless *blush*. Is it the surmise of imagination, or do the skies really redden with shame, to see so many supinely stretched on their drowsy pillows! Shall man be lost in luxurious ease? Shall man waste these precious hours in idle slumbers, while the vigorous sun is up, and going on his Maker's errand? while all the feathered choir are hymning the Creator, and paying their homage in harmony? No; let *him* heighten the melody of the tuneful tribes by adding the rational strains of devotion; let *him* improve the fragrant oblations of nature by mingling with the rising odours the more refined breath of praise.

'Tis natural for man to look upwards, to throw his first glance upon the objects that are above him.

> Strait towards heaven my wondering eyes I turn'd,
> And gazed a while the ample sky.

Prodigious theatre! where lightnings dart their fire, and thunders utter their voice; where tempests

spend their rage, and worlds unnumbered roll at large! O the *greatness* of that mighty hand, which meteth out this amazing circumference with a span! O the *immensity* of that wonderful Being, before whom this unmeasureable extent is no more than a point! And O (thou pleasing thought!) the unsearchable *riches* of that *mercy*; which is *greater than the heavens!* is more enlarged and extensive in its gracious exercise, than these illimitable tracts of air, and sea, and firmament! which pardons crimes of the most enormous size and the most horrid aggravations; pardons them in consideration of the Redeemer's atonement, with perfect freeness and the utmost readiness! more readily, if it were possible, than this *all-surrounding expanse* admits within its circuit a ridge of mountains, or even a grain of sand.

Come hither, then ye *awakened*, trembling sinners; come, weary and heavy-laden with a sense of your iniquities: condemn yourselves; renounce all reliance on any thing of your own; let your *trust be in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever.*

In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun. Behold him coming forth from the chambers of the east; see the clouds, like floating curtains, are thrown back at his approach. With what *refulgent majesty* does he walk abroad! how transcendently bright is his countenance, shedding day and inexhaustable light through the universe! Is there a scene, though finished by the most elaborate and costly refinements of art, "comparable to these illustrious solemnities of opening sunshine? Before *these* all the studied pageantry of the theatre, the glittering economy of an assembly, or even the heightened ornaments of a royal palace, hide their diminished heads, and shrink into nothing." I have

read of a person so struck with the splendours of this noble luminary, that he imagined himself made on purpose to contemplate its glories. O! that Christians would adopt his persuasion, and transfer it to the *Sun of Righteousness!* Thus applied, it would cease to be a chimerical notion, and become a most important truth. For sure I am, it is the supreme happiness of the eternal state, and therefore may well be the ruling concern of this present life, *to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.* Nor do I stand alone in this opinion. The very best judge of whatever is valuable in science, or perfective of our nature; a judge who formed his taste on the maxims of paradise, and received the finishing of his education in the third heavens; this judge determines to "know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." He possessed, in his own person, the finest, the most admired accomplishments; yet pronounces them no better than dung, in comparison of the superexcellent excellency of this saving knowlege.

Methinks I discern a thousand admirable properties in the sun; 'tis certainly the best material emblem of the Creator. There is more of God in its lustre, energy and usefulness, than in any other visible being. To worship it as a deity, was the least inexcusable of all the heathen idolatries. One scarce can wonder that fallen reason should mistake so fair a copy for the adorable original. No comparison in the whole book of sacred wisdom pleases me more, than that which resembles the blessed Jesus to yonder regent of the day: who now advances on his azure road, to scatter light and dispense gladness through the nations.

What were all the realms of the world, but a dungeon of darkness, without the beams of the sun?

All their fine scenes hid from our view; lost in obscurity. In vain we roll around our eyes in the midnight gloom. In vain we strive to behold the features of amiable nature. Turn whither we will, no form or comeliness appears. All seems a dreary waste, an undistinguished chaos. Till the returning hours have unbarred the gates of light, and let forth the morn. Then, what a prospect opens! The heavens are paved with azure, and strewed with roses. A variety of the liveliest verdures array the plains. The flowers put on a glow of the richest colours. the whole creation stands forth, dressed in all the charms of beauty. The ravished eye looks round and wonders.

And what had been the condition of our intellectual nature without the great Redeemer, and his *divine revelation?* Alas! what absurd and unworthy apprehensions did the *Pagan* sages form of God! What idle dreams, what childish conjectures, were their doctrines of a future state! How did the bulk even of that favoured nation, the *Jews*, weary themselves in every vanity to obtain peace and reconciliation with their offended Jehovah! till Jesus arose upon our benighted minds, and brought life and immortality to light; till he arose *to enlighten the wretched Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel.*

Now we no longer cry out with a restless impatience, *Where is God my Maker?* for we are allowed to contemplate the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, *in the face of Jesus Christ.* Now we no longer inquire, with an unsatisfied solicitude, "Which is the way to bliss?" because Jesus has marked the *path* by his shining example, and left us an unerring *clew* in his holy word. Now, we have no more reason to proceed

with misgiving hearts in our journey to eternity, or to ask anxiously as we go, "Who will roll away the stone and open the everlasting doors? Who will remove the flaming sword, and give us admission into the delights of Paradise?" for it is done, all done, by the Captain of our salvation. Sin he has *expiated* by the unblemished sacrifice of himself: the law he has *fulfilled* by his perfect obedience: the sinner he *transforms* by his sanctifying spirit: in a word, he hath both presented us with a *clear discovery* of good things to come, and administered to us an *abundant entrance* into the final enjoyment of them.

Whenever, therefore, we bless God for the circling seasons and revolving day, let us adore, thankfully adore him, for the *more precious* appearance of the Sun of Righteousness, and his glorious Gospel, without which we should have been groping, even to this hour, in spiritual darkness and the shadow of death; without which we must have wandered in a maze of inextricable uncertainties, and have "stumbled upon the dark mountains" of error, till we fell into the bottomless pit of perdition.

Without that grand *enlivening* principle, what were this earth, but a lifeless mass, a rude lump of *inactive* matter? The trees could never break forth into leaves, nor the plants spring up into flowers: we should no more behold the meadows mantled over with green, nor the valleys standing thick with corn: or, to speak in the beautiful language of a prophet, "*No longer would the fig-tree blossom nor fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive would fail; and the fields could yield no meat; the flocks must be cut off from the fold, and there would be no herd in the stalls.* The sun darts its beams among all the vegetable tribes, and paints

the spring, and enriches the autumn: this pierces to the roots of the vineyard and the orchard, and sets afloat those fomenting juices which at length burst into floods of wine, or bend the boughs with a mellow load. Nor are its favours confined to the *upper regions*, but distributed into the *deepest recesses* of creation. It penetrates the beds of metal, and finds its way to the place of the sapphires: it tinctures the seeds of gold that are ripening into ore, and throws a brilliancy into the water of the diamond that is hardening on its rock: in short, the beneficial agency of this magnificent luminary is inexpressible; it *beautifies* and *impregnates* universal nature; "there is nothing hid from the heat thereof."

Just in the same manner were the rational world *dead in trespasses and sins*, without the reviving energy of Jesus Christ. He is the "Resurrection and the Life;" the overflowing fountain of the one, and the all powerful-cause of the other. The second *Adam* is *a quickening Spirit*, and all his saints live through him, He shines upon their affections, and they shoot forth into heavenly graces, and abound in the fruits of righteousness. Faith unfeigned, and love undissembled, those noblest productions of the renewed nature, are the effects of *his* operation on the mind. Not so much as one divine disposition could spread itself, not one Christian habit unfold and flourish, without the kindly influences of *his* grace.

As there is no fruitfulness, so likewise no *cheerfulness*, without the sun. When that auspicious sovereign of the day diffuses the mildness of his morning splendour, he creates an universal festival. Millions of glittering insects awake into existence, and bask in his rays: the birds start from their

slumbers, and pour their delighted souls in harmony: the flocks with bleating accents hail the welcome blessing: the valleys ring with rural music: the hills echo back the artless strains: all that is vocal joins in the general choir: all that has breath exults in the cheering influence. Whereas, was that radiant orb extinguished, a tremendous gloom would ensue, and horror insupportable. Nay, let it only be *eclipsed* for a few minutes, and all nature assumes an air of *sadness:* the heavens are wrapped in sables, and put on a kind of mourning; the most sprightly animals hang down their dejected heads; the songsters of the grove are struck dumb; howling beasts roam abroad for prey; ominous birds come forth and screech; the heart of man fails, or a sudden pang seizes the foreboding mind. So, when Christ hides away his face, when faith loses sight of that consolation of *Israel;* how *gloomy* are the prospects of the soul! Our God seems to be a consuming fire, and our sins cry loudly for vengeance: the thoughts bleed inwardly; the Christian walks heavily; all without is irksome, all within is disconsolate. Lift up then, most gracious Jesus, thou *nobler day-spring* from on high! O lift up the light of thy countenance upon thy people! Reveal the fulness of thy mediatorial sufficiency; make clear our title to this great salvation, and thereby impart

> What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
> The soul's calm sunshine, and the heart-felt joy.

In one instance more let me pursue the similitude. The sun, I observe, pours his lustre all *around*, to every *distance* and in every *direction:* profusely liberal of his gifts, he illuminates and cheers all the

ends of the earth and the whole compass of the skies; the east reddens with his rising radiance, and the western hills are gilded with his streaming splendours: the chilly regions of the north are cherished by his genial warmth, while the southern tracts glow with his fire. Thus are the influences of the Sun or Righteousness *diffusive* and *unconfined;* the generations of old felt them, and generations yet unborn will rejoice in them; the merits of his precious death extended to the first, and will be propagated to the last ages of mankind. May they, ere long, visit the remotest climates and darkest corners of the earth! Command thy Gospel, blessed Jesus, thy everlasting Gospel, to take the wings of the morning and travel with yonder sun; let it fly upon strong pinions among every people, nation, and language; that where the heat scorches and the cold freezes, thou mayst be known, confessed, and adored! and *strangers* to thy name, and *enemies* to thy doctrine, may be enlightened with the knowledge and won to the love of thy truth! O! may that best of æras come, that wished-for period advance, when *all the ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations worship before him!*

From the heavens we retire to the earth. Here the drops of *dew* like so many liquid crystals, sparkle upon the eye. How *brilliant* and unsullied is their lustre! How little inferior to the proud stone which irradiates a monarch's crown! They want nothing but solidity and permanency to equal them with the finest treasures of the jeweller's casket. Here it must be confessed, they are greatly deficient. Short-lived ornaments, possessed of little more than a *momentary radiance;* the sun that lights them up will soon melt them into air, or exhale them into

vapours; within another hour we may "look for their place, and they shall be away." O! may every good resolution of mine and of my flock's, may our united breathings after God, not be like these *transient decorations* of the morning, but like the substantial glory of the growing day! The one shines more and more with augmented splendours; while the other, having glittered gaily for a few moments, disappear and are lost.

How sensibly has this dew *refreshed* the vegetable kingdom! The fervent heat of yesterday's sun had almost parched the face and exhausted the sweets of nature. But what a sovereign restorative are these *cooling distillations* of the night! How they gladden and invigorate the languishing herbs! Sprinkled with these reviving drops, their verdure deepens, their bloom is new flushed; their fragrance, faint or intermitted, becomes potent and copious. Thus doth the ever-blessed Spirit *revive* the drooping troubled conscience of a sinner. When that Almighty Comforter sheds his sweet influence on the soul, displays the all-sufficient sacrifice of a Divine Redeemer, and "witnesses with our spirit," that we are *interested* in the Saviour, and by this means are *children of God;* then what a pleasing change ensues! Former anxieties are remembered no more; every uneasy apprehension vanishes; soothing hopes and delightful expectations succeed; the countenance drops its dejected mien; the eyes brighten with a lively cheerfulness; while the lips express the heart-felt satisfaction in the language of thanksgiving and the voice of melody. In this sense, merciful God, *be as the dew unto Israel!* "Pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing." And O! let not my fleece be dry, while heavenly benediction descends upon all around.

Who can number these pearly drops? They hang on every hedge, they twinkle from every spray and adorn the whole herbage of the field. Not a blade of grass, not a single leaf, but wears the watery pendants; so *vast* is the *profusion*, that it baffles the arithmetician's art. Here let the benevolent mind contemplate and admire the emphatical Scripture, which from this elegant similitude describes the *increase* of the *Messiah's* kingdom. The royal prophet, speaking of Christ, and foretelling the success of his religion, has this remarkable expression; *the dew of thy birth is of the womb of the morning:* (i. e.) As the morning is the mother of dews, produces them as it were from a prolific womb, and scatters them with the most lavish abundance over all the surface of the earth; *so shall thy seed be*, O thou everlasting Father! By the preaching of thy word, shall such an innumerable race of regenerate children be born unto Thee; and prove an ornament and a blessing to all ages. Millions, millions of willing converts from every nation under heaven, shall crowd into thy family, and replenish thy church, till they become like the stars of the sky or the sands of the sea for multitude, or even as *numberless* as these fine *spangles* which now cover the face of nature. Behold then, ye obstinately wicked, though you "are not gathered, yet will the Saviour be glorious." His design shall not miscarry nor his labour prove abortive, though you render it of none effect with regard to yourselves: think not that Immanuel will want believers, or heaven inhabitants, because *you* continue incorrigible. No, the Lamb that was slain will "see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied," in a neverfailing series of faithful people below, and an immense choir of glorified saints above, who shall form his retinue and

surround his throne in shining and triumphant armies, such as no man can number.

Here I was reminded of the various expedients which Providence, unsearchably wise, uses to *fructify* both the material and intellectual world. Sometimes you shall have *impetuous* and heavy *showers* bursting from the angry clouds: they lash the plains and make the rivers foam; a storm brings them, and a deluge follows them. At other times these *gentle dews* are formed in the serene evening air: they steal down by slow degrees and with insensible stillness; so subtle, that they deceive the nicest eye; so silent, that they escape the most delicate ear; and when fallen, so very light, that they neither bruise the tenderest nor oppress the weakest flower. Very *different* operations! yet each concurs in the *same* beneficial end, and both impart fertility to the lap of nature.

So some persons have I known, reclaimed from the unfruitful works of darkness by *violent* and severe means. The Almighty addressed their stubborn hearts as he addressed the *Israelites at Sinai*, with lightning in his eyes and thunder in his voice. The conscience, smit with a sense of guilt, and apprehensive of eternal vengeance, trembled through all her powers; just as that strong mountain tottered to its centre: pangs of remorse and agonies of fear preceded their new birth; they were reduced to the last extremities, almost overwhelmed with despair, before they found rest in Jesus Christ. Others have been recovered from a vain conversation by methods more *mild* and attractive. The Father of spirits applied himself to their teachable minds in "a still and small voice:" his grace came down as the rain into a fleece of wool, or as these softening drops which now water the earth. The

kingdom of God took place in their souls without noise or observation. They passed from death unto life, from a carnal to a regenerate state, by almost imperceptible advances; the transition resembled the growth of corn; was very visible when effected, though scarce sensible while accomplishing. O thou Author and Finisher of our faith, recal us from our wanderings and re-unite us to Thyself! Whether Thou *alarm* us with thy terrors, or *allure* us with thy smiles; whether thou drive us with the scourge of conviction, or draw us with the cords of love; let us in any-wise return to thee; for Thou art our supreme good, Thou art our only happiness.

Before I proceed farther, let me ascend the *terrace* and take one survey of the neighbouring *country*. What a prospect rushes upon my sight! How vast, how various, how "full and plenteous with all manner of store!" Nature's whole wealth! What a rich and inexhaustible magazine is here furnishing subsistence for every creature! Methinks I read in these spacious volumes a most lively comment upon that noble celebration of the divine beneficence; *He openeth his hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness.*

> These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
> Thus wondrous fair! Thyself how wondrous then!
>
> MILTON.

The *fields* are covered deep, and stand thick with corn: they expand the milky *grain* to the sun, while the gales, now inclining, now rising each flexile stem, open all their ranks to the agency of his beams; which will soon impart a firm consistence to the grain, and a glossy, golden hue to the ear,

that they may be qualified to fill the barns of the husbandman with plenty, and his heart with gladness.

Yonder lie the *meadows* smoothed into a perfect level, decorated with an embroidery of the gayest flowers, and loaded with spontaneous crops of *herbage;* which, converted into hay, will prove a most commodious provision for the barrenness of winter, will supply with fodder our serviceable animals, when all the verdure of the plain is killed by frosts or buried in snows. A winding *stream* glides along the flowery margin, and receives the image of the bending skies, and waters the roots of many a branching willow: 'tis stocked, no doubt, with variety of *fish*, which afford a solitary diversion to the angler, and nourish for his table a delicious treat: nor is it the only merit of this liquid element to maintain the finny nations; it also carries *cleanliness*, and dispenses *fruitfulness* whereever it rolls the crystal current.

The *pastures* with their verdant mounds chequer the prospect, and prepare a standing repast for our cattle: there "our oxen are made strong to labour, and our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands;" there the horse acquires vigour for the despatch of our business, and speed to expedite our journeys; from thence the kine bring home their udders distended with one of the richest and healthiest liquors in the world.

On several spots, a *grove* of trees, like some grand colonade, erects its towering head; every one projects a friendly shade for the beasts, and creates an hospitable lodging for the birds; every one stands ready to furnish *timber* for a palace, *masts* for a navy, or, with a more condescending courtesy, *fuel* for our hearths. One of them seems skirted with a

wild uncultivated *heath*, which, like well disposed shades in painting, throws an additional lustre on the more ornamented parts of the landscape. Nor is its usefulness, like that of a foil, relative only, but real. There several valuable creatures are produced and accommodated, without any expense or care of ours. There likewise spring abundance of those *herbs* which assuage the smart of our wounds, and allay the fiery tumults of the fever; which impart floridity to our circulating fluids, add a more vigorous tone to our active solids, and thereby repair the decays of our enfeebled constitution.

Nearer the houses we perceive an ample spread of branches, not so stately as the oaks, but more amiable for their annual services; a little while ago I beheld them, and all was one beauteous boundless waste of *blossoms;* the eye marvelled at the lovely sight, and the heart rejoiced in the prospect of autumnal plenty; but now the blooming maid is resigned for the useful matron; the flower is fallen, and the *fruit* swells out on every twig. Breathe soft, ye winds! O, spare the tender fruitage, ye surly blasts! Let the *pear-tree* suckle her juicy progeny, till they drop into our hands and dissolve in our mouths; let the *plum* hang unmolested upon her boughs, till she fatten her delicious flesh, and cloud her polished skin with blue; and as for the *apples*, that staple commodity of our *orchards*, let no injurious shocks precipitate them immaturely to the ground, till revolving suns have tinged them with a ruddy complexion, and concocted them into an exquisite flavour. Then, what copious hoards, what burnished rinds, and what delightful relishes will replenish the store-room! Some to present us with an early entertainment, and refresh our palates amidst the sultry heat. Some to borrow ripe-

ness from the falling snows, and carry autumn into the depths of winter. Some to adorn the salver, make a part of the desert, and give an agreeable close to our feasts. Others to fill our vats with a foaming flood, which, mellowed by age, may sparkle in the glass with a liveliness and delicacy little inferior to the blood of the grape.

I observe several small *inclosures*, which seem to be apprehensive of some hostile visit from the north, and therefore are defended on that quarter by a thick wood or a lofty wall; at the same time they cultivate an uninterrupted correspondence with the south, and throw open their whole dimensions to its friendly warmth. One in particular lies within the reach of a distinguishing view, and proves to be a *kitchen-garden:* it looks, methinks, like a plain and frugal republic. Whatever may resemble the pomp of courts or the ensigns of royalty is banished from this humble community. None of the productions of the olitory affect finery, but all are habited with the very perfection of decency. Here those celebrated qualities are eminently united, the utmost simplicity with the exactest neatness. A skilful hand has parcelled out the whole ground into narrow beds and intervening alleys. The same discreet management has assigned to each verdant family a peculiar and distinct abode; so that there is no confusion amidst the great multiplicity, because every individual knows its proper home, and all the tribes are ranged with perfect regularity. If it be pleasing to behold their orderly situation and their modest beauties, how much more delightful to consider the advantages they yield! What a *fund* of choice *accommodations* is here! What a source of wholesome dainties! And all for the enjoyment of man. Why does the *parsley*, with her frizled locks,

shag the border; or why the *celery*, with her whitening arms, perforate the mould, but to render his soups savoury? The *asparagus* shoots its tapering stems to offer him the first-fruits of the season; and the *artichoke* spreads its turgid top to give him a treat of vegetable marrow. The tendrils of the *cucumber* creep into the sun; and, though basking in its hottest rays, they secrete for their master, and barrel up for his use, the most cooling juices of the soil. The *beans* stand firm like files of embattled troops; the *peas* rest upon their props like so many companies of invalids; while both replenish their pods with the fatness of the earth, on purpose to pour it on their owner's table. Not one species, among all this variety of herbs, is a cumberer of the ground. Not a single plant but is good for food, or some way salutary. With so beneficent an economy are the several periods of their ministration settled, that no portion of the year is left destitute of nourishing esculents. What is still more obliging, every portion of the year affords such esculents as are best suited to the temperature of the air and the state of our bodies. Why then should the *possessors* of so valuable a spot envy the condition of kings? since he may daily walk amidst rows of peaceable and obsequious, though mute subjects; every one of which renders him some agreeable present, and pays him a willing tribute, such as is most happily adapted both to supply his wants and to regale his taste; to furnish him at once with plenty and with pleasure.

At a distance one descries the mighty *hills:* they heave their huge ridges among the clouds, and look like the barriers of kingdoms, or the boundaries of nature. Bare and deformed as their surface may appear, their bowels are fraught with inward treasures; treasures lodged fast in the *quarries*, or sunk

deep in the *mines*. From thence industry may draw her implements to plough the soil, to reap the grain, and procure every necessary convenience. From thence art may fetch her materials to rear the dome, to swell the organ, and form the noblest ornaments of politer life.

On another side the *great deep* terminates the view. *There go the ships: there is that leviathan:* and there, in that world of waters, an inconceivable number of animals have their habitation. This is the capacious *cistern* of the *universe;* which admits, as into a receptacle, and distributes, as from a reservoir, whatever waters the whole globe. There is not a fountain that gushes in the unfrequented desert, nor a rivulet that flows in the remotest continent, nor a cloud that swims in the highest regions of the firmament, but is fed by this all-replenishing source. The ocean is the grand *vehicle of trade*, and the uniter of distant nations. To us it is peculiarly kind, not only as it wafts into our ports the harvest of every climate, and renders our island the centre of traffic, but also as it secures us from foreign invasions by a sort of impregnable intrenchment.

Methinks the view of this profuse munificence inspires a *secret delight*, and kindles a *disinterested good-will*. While the "little hills clap their hands," and the luxuriant "valleys laugh and sing;" who can forbear catching the general joy? who is not touched with lively sensations of pleasure? While the everlasting Father is scattering blessings through his whole family, and crowning the year with his goodness; who does not feel his breast overflowing with a diffusive benevolence? My heart, I must confess, beats high with satisfaction, and breathes out *congratulatory wishes* upon all the tenants of

these rural abodes; "peace be within your walls, as well as plenteousness around your dwellings." Live, ye highly favoured, live sensible of your benefits, and thankful to your Benefactor. Look round upon these prodigiously large incomes of the fruitful soil, and call them (for you have free leave) all your own. Only let me remind you of one very important truth. Let me suggest, and may you never forget, that you are *obliged* to Christ Jesus for every one of these accommodations which spring from the teeming earth, and the smiling skies.

1. Christ *made* them, when they were not. He fetched them up from utter darkness, and gave them both their being and their beauty. He created the materials of which they are composed, and moulded them into this endless multiplicity of amiable forms and useful substances. He arrayed the heavens with a vesture of the mildest blue, and clothed the earth in a livery of the gayest green. His pencil streaked, and his breath perfumed, whatever is beautiful or fragrant in the universe. His strength set fast the mountains; his goodness garnished the vales; and the same *touch* which healed the *leper*, wrought the whole visible *system* into this complete perfection.

2. Christ *recovered* them when they were forfeited.—By *Adam's* sin we lost our right to the comforts of life and fruits of the ground. His disobedience was the most impious and horrid *treason* against the King of kings. Consequently his whole patrimony became *confiscated:* as well the portion of temporal good things settled upon the human race during their minority, as that everlasting heritage reserved for their enjoyment when they should come to full age. But the "seed of the woman"

instantly interposing, took off the attainder, and redeemed the alienated inheritance. The first *Adam* being disinherited, the second *Adam* was *appointed heir of all things*, visible as well as invisible. And we hold our possession of the former, we expect an instatement in the latter, purely by virtue of our alliance to Him, and our union with Him.

3. Christ *upholds* them, which would otherwise tumble into ruin. *By him*, says the Oracle of Inspiration, *all things consist*. His finger rolls the seasons round, and presides over all the celestial revolutions. His finger winds up the wheels, and impels every spring of vegetative nature. In a word, the whole weight of the creation rests upon his mighty arm, and receives the whole harmony of its motion from his unerring eye. This habitable globe, with all its rich appendages and fine machinery, could no more continue, than they could create themselves. *Start* they would into instant *confusion*, or *drop* into their primitive nothing, did not his power support, and his wisdom regulate them every moment. In conformity to his will, they subsist steadfast and invariable in their orders, and wait only for his sovereign nod, to "fall away like water that runneth apace."

4. Christ *actuates* them, which would otherwise be lifeless and insignificant. Pensioners, they are constant pensioners, on his bounty; and borrow their *all* from his fulness. *He only has life*; and whatever operates, operates by an emanation from his all-sufficiency. Does the grape refresh you with its enlivening juices? It is by a warrant received, and virtue derived, from the Redeemer. Does bread strengthen your heart, and prove the staff of your life? Remember, that it is by the Saviour's

appointment, and through the efficacy of his operation. You are charmed with *his* melody, when the "time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the nightingale is heard in your land." You taste *his* goodness in the luscious fig, the melting peach, and the musky flavour of the apricot. You smell *his* sweetness in the opening honeysuckle and every odoriferous shrub.

Could these creatures speak for themselves, they would doubtless disclaim all sufficiency of their own, and ascribe the whole honour to their Maker. "We are servants," would they say, "of Him, who died for you. *Cisterns* only, dry cisterns in ourselves, we *transmit* to mortals no more than the uncreated fountain tranfuses into us. Think not that from any ability of our own, we furnish you with assistance, or administer to your comfort. 'Tis the divine energy, the divine energy alone, that works in us, and does you good. We *serve* you, O ye sons of men, that you may *love* Him, who placed us in these stations. O! love the Lord, therefore, all ye who are supported by our ministry, or else we shall groan with indignation, and regret at your abuse of our services. Use us, and welcome; for we are yours, if ye are Christ's. Crop our choicest beauties; rifle all our treasures; accommodate yourselves with our most valuable qualities; only let us be incentives to your *gratitude*, and motives to your *obedience*."

Having surveyed the spacious sky, and sent a glance round the inferior creation; 'tis time to descend from this eminence, and confine my attention to the *beautiful spot* below—Here Nature, always pleasing, every where lovely, appears with peculiar attractions. Yonder she seems dressed in her dishabille; grant, but irregular; here, she calls in

her handmaid Art, and shines in all the delicate ornaments which the nicest cultivation is able to convey. *Those* are her common apartments, where she lodges her ordinary guests; *this* is her cabinet of curiosities, where she entertains her intimate acquaintances. My eye shall often expatiate over those scenes of universal fertility: my feet shall sometimes brush through the thicket, or traverse the lawn, or stroll along the forest glade: but to this delightful retreat shall be my chief resort. Thither will I *make excursions*, but here will I *dwell*.

If, from my low procedure, I may form an allusion to the most exalted practices, I would observe upon this occasion, that the celebrated *Erasmus*, and our judicious *Locke*, having trod the circle of the sciences and ranged through the whole extent of *human* literature, at length betook themselves solely to the *Bible*. Leaving the sages of antiquity, they sat incessantly at the feet of Jesus. Wisely they withdrew from that immense multiplicity of learning, from those endless tracts of amusing erudition, where noxious weeds are mixed with wholesome herbs, where is generally a much larger growth of prickly shrubs than of fruitful boughs. They spent their most mature hours in those hallowed gardens which God's own wisdom planted; which God's own Spirit watereth; and in which God's own Son is continually walking; where he meeteth those that seek him, and revealeth to them the glories of his person and the riches of his goodness.

Thus would I finish the remainder of my days! Having just *tasted* (what they call) the politer studies, I would now devote my whole *application* to the lively oracles. From other pursuits I might glean perhaps, a few scattered fragments of low, of lean, of unsatisfactory instruction. From this, I

trust to reap a harvest of the sublimest truths, the noblest improvements, and the purest joys. Waft me then, O! waft my mind to *Sion's* consecrated bowers. Let my thoughts perpetually rove through the awfully-pleasing walks of inspiration. Here grow those heaven-born plants, the trees of *life* and *knowledge*, whose ambrosial fruits we now may "take and eat, and live for ever." Here flow those precious streams of *grace* and *righteousness*, whose living waters "whosoever drinks shall thirst no more." And what can the fables of *Grecian* song, or the finest pages of *Roman* eloquence—what can they exhibit in any degree comparable to these matchless prerogatives of Revelation? Therefore, though I should not dislike to pay a *visit* now and then to my heathen masters, I would live with the prophets and apostles. With those, I would carry on some occasional correspondence; but these should be my bosom friends, my inseparable companions, "my delight and my counsellors."

What *sweets* are these, which so agreeably salute my nostrils? They are the breath of the flowers, the incense of the garden. How liberally does the jessamine dispense her odoriferous riches! How delicously has the woodbine embalmed this morning walk! The air is all perfume. And is not this another most engaging argument to forsake the bed of *sloth?* Who would lie dissolved in senseless slumbers, while so many breathing sweets invite him to a feast of fragrancy? especially considering, that the advancing day will exhale the volatile dainties. A *fugitive treat* they are, prepared only for the wakeful and industrious: whereas, when the sluggard lifts his heavy eyes, the flowers will droop, their fine scents be dissipated, and, instead of this

refreshing humidity, the air will become a kind of liquid fire.

With this very *motive*, heightened by a representation of the most charming pieces of morning-scenery, the parent of mankind awakes his lovely consort. There is such a delicacy in the choice, and so much life in the description, of these rural images, that I cannot excuse myself without repeating the whole passage. Whisper it, some friendly *genius*, in the ear of every one who is now sunk in sleep, and lost to all these refined gratifications!

> Awake: the morning shines, and the fresh field
> Calls you: ye lose the prime, to mark how spring
> The tender plants, how blows the citron grove;
> What drops the myrrh, and what the balmy reed;
> How nature paints her colours; how the bee
> Sits on the bloom extracting liquid sweets.

How delightful is this fragrance! It is distributed in the nicest *proportion;* neither so strong as to oppress the organs, nor so faint as to elude them. We are soon cloyed at a sumptuous banquet; but this pleasure never loses its *poignancy*, never palls the appetite. Here luxury itself is innocent; or rather, in this case, indulgence is incapable of excess. This balmy entertainment not only regales the *sense*, but cheers the very *soul;* and, instead of clogging, elates its powers. It puts me in mind of that ever memorable sacrifice which was once made in behalf of offending mortals: I mean the *sacrifice of the blessed Jesus*, when he offered up himself to God, "for a sweet-smelling savour." Such the Holy Spirit styles that wonderful oblation; as if no image in the whole sensible creation was so proper to give us an idea of the *ineffable satisfaction* which the Father of Mercies conceived from that unparal-

leled atonement, as the *pleasing sensations* which such rich perfumes are capable of raising. "Thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil," from an apostate world; the most submissive acknowledgments, added to the most costly offerings, from men of defiled hands and unclean lips; what could they have effected? A prophet represents the "High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity," turning himself away from such filthy rags, turning himself away with a disdainful abhorrence, as from the noisome steams of a dunghill; but in Christ's immaculate holiness, in Christ's consummate obedience, in Christ's most precious blood-shedding, with what unimaginable complacency does justice rest satisfied, and vengeance acquiesce! All thy *works*, O thou surety for ruined sinners! all thy *sufferings*, O thou slaughtered Lamb of God! as well as all thy *garments*, O thou bridegroom of thy church! *smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia!* They are infinitely more grateful to the eternal Godhead, than the choicest exhalations of the garden, than all the odours of the Spicy East, can be to the human nostrils.

As the altar of old, sanctified the gift, so this is the great propitiation which recommends the obnoxious persons and unprofitable services of the believing world. In *this* may my soul be interested! by *this* may it be reconciled to the Father! There is such a leprous depravity cleaving to my nature, as pollutes whatever I perform: my most profound adorations and sincerest acts of religion must not presume to *challenge* a reward, but humbly *implore* forgiveness. Renouncing therefore myself in every instance of duty, disclaiming all shadow of confidence in any deeds of my own, may I now and evermore *be accepted through the beloved!*

What *colours*, what charming colours are here! these so nobly bold, and those so delicately languid! What a glow is enkindled in some, what a gloss shines upon others! In one, methinks, I see the ruby with her bleeding radiance; in another, the sapphire with her sky-tinctured blue: in all, such an exquisite richness of dyes, as no other set of paintings in the universe can boast. With what a masterly *skill* is every one of the varying tints *disposed!* Here they seem to be thrown on with an easy dash of security and freedom, there they are adjusted by the nicest touches of art and accuracy: those which form the ground are always so judiciously chosen, as to heighten the lustre of the superadded figures; while the verdure of the impalement, or the shadings of the foliage, impart new liveliness to the whole: indeed, whether they are blended or arranged, or softened or contrasted, they are manifestly under the conduct of a taste that never mistakes, a felicity that never falls short of the very perfection of elegance. Fine, inimitably fine is the *texture* of the web on which these shining treasures are displayed. What are the labours of *Persian* looms, or the boasted commodities of *Brussels*, compared with these curious manufactures of Nature? Compared with these, the most admired chintses lose their reputation; even superfine cambrics appear coarse as canvass in their presence.

What a cheering argument does our Saviour derive from hence, to strengthen our *affiance* in God! He directs us to learn a lesson of heaven-depending faith, from every bird that wings the air, and from every flower that blossoms in the field. If Providence, with unremitted care, supports those inferior creatures, and arrays these insensible beings with so much splendour; surely He will in no wise with-

hold from his elect children "bread to eat, and raiment to put on." Ye faithful followers of the Lamb, dismiss every low *anxiety* relating to the needful *sustenance* of life. He that feeds the ravens from an inexhaustible magazine; He that paints the plants with such surprising elegance; in short, He that provides so liberally both for the animal and vegetable parts of his creation, will not, cannot, neglect his own people. *Fear not, little flock,* ye peculiar objects of Almighty love! *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom.* And, if He freely gives you an everlasting kingdom hereafter, is it possible to suppose that He will deny you any necessary conveniences here?

One cannot forbear reflecting in this place, on the too prevailing humour of being fond and ostentatious of dress. What an abject and mistaken ambition is this! How unworthy the dignity of *immortal,* and the wisdom of *rational* beings! especially, since these little productions of the earth have indisputably the pre-eminence in such outward embellishments. Go, clothe thyself with purple and fine linen, trick thyself up in all the gay attire which the shuttle or the needle can furnish; yet know, to the mortification of thy vanity, that the *native* elegance of a common daisy eclipses all this *elaborate* finery. Nay wert thou decked like some illustrious princess on her coronation day, in all the splendour of royal apparel; couldst thou equal even *Solomon* in the height of his magnificence and glory, yet would the meanest among the *flowery populace* outshine thee; every discerning eye would give the preference to these beauties of the ground. Scorn, then, to borrow thy recommendations from a neat disposition of threads, and a curious arrangement of colours: assume a becoming greatness of temper: let thy

endowments be of the immortal kind: study to be *all-glorious within:* be clothed with humility: wear the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, to say all in a word, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ:* let his *blood* be sprinkled upon thy conscience, and it shall be whiter than the virgin snows: let his *righteousness*, like a spotless robe, adorn thy inner man; and thou shalt be amiable, even in the most distinguishing eye of God: let his blessed *Spirit* dwell in thy heart; and, under his sanctifying operations, thou shalt be made a partaker of a divine nature.

These are real excellencies; truly noble accomplishments these. In this manner be arrayed, be beautified; and thou wilt not find a rival in the feathers of a peacock, or the foliation of a tulip. These will exalt thee far above the *low pretensions* of lace and embroidery. These will prepare thee to stand in the beatific presence, and to take thy seat among the angels of light.

What an enchanting *situation* is this! One can scarce be melancholy within the atmosphere of flowers. Such lively hues and delicious odours, not only adress themselves agreeably to the senses, but, touch, with a surprising delicacy, the sweetest movements of the mind.

——To the heart inspiring
Vernal delight and joy. MILTON, B. IV.

How often have I felt them dissipate the *gloom* of thought and transfuse a sudden gaiety through the dejected spirit! I cannot wonder that kings descend from their *thrones* to walk amidst blooming ivory and gold; or retire from the most sumptuous feast to be recreated with the more refined sweets of the garden. I cannot wonder that queens forego

for a while the compliments of a nation, to receive the tribute of the parterre; or withdraw from all the glitter of a *court*, to be attended with the more splendid *equipage* of a bed of flowers. But if this be so pleasing, what transporting pleasure must arise from the fruition of uncreated Excellency! O, what unknown delight to enter into thy *immediate presence*, most blessed Lord God! to see thee, thou King of Heaven, and Lord of Glory, no longer "through a glass darkly, but face to face!" to have all thy goodness, all thy greatness, shine before us; and be made glad for ever with the brightest discovery of thy perfections, with the ineffable joy of thy countenance!

This we cannot bear in our present imperfect state. The effulgence of unveiled Divinity would dazzle a mortal sight. Our feeble faculties would be *overwhelmed* with such a *fulness* of superabundant bliss, and must lie *oppressed* under such an exceeding great, eternal *weight* of glory. But when this corruptible hath put on incorruption, the powers of the soul will be greatly invigorated; and these earthly tabernacles will be transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. Then, though "the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed," when the Lord of Hosts is revealed from heaven, yet shall his faithful people be enabled to *see him as He is*.

Here then, my wishes, here be fixed. Be *this* your determined and invariable aim. Here, my affections, here give a loose to your whole ardour. Cry out, in the language of inspiration: *This one thing have I desired of the Lord, which* with incessant earnestness *I will require,—that I may dwell in the* celestial *house of the Lord all the days of my* future *life, to behold the fair beauty of the*

Lord, and to contemplate with wonder and adoration, with unspeakable and everlasting rapture, all the attributes of the incomprehensible Godhead.

Solomon, a most penetrating judge of human nature, knowing how highly mankind is charmed with the fine qualities of flowers, has figured out the blessed Jesus, that "fairest among ten thousand," by these lovely representatives. He styles him *The rose of Sharon*, and *The lily of the valleys;* like the first, full of delight and communicable graces; like the last, exalted in majesty, and complete in beauty. In that sacred pastoral, he ranges the creation, borrows its most finished forms, and dips his pencil in its choicest dyes, to present us with a sketch of the amiableness of his person: his amiableness, who is the light of the world, the glory of his church, the only hope, the sovereign consolation of sinners, and exalted, infinitely exalted, not only above the sublimest comparison, but even "above all blessing and praise." May I also make the same heavenly use of all sublunary enjoyments! Whatever is pleasureable or charming *below*, let it raise my desire to those delectable objects which are *above;* which will yield, not partial, but perfect felicity; not transient, but never ending satisfaction and joy. Yes my soul, let these beauties in *miniature* always remind thee of that glorious Person, in whom "dwells all the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily." Let these little emanations teach thee to thirst after the eternal fountain. O! may the creatures be thy constant clew to the Creator! For this is a certain truth, and deserves thy frequent recollection, demands thy most attentive consideration,—that the whole compass of finite perfection is only a faint ray, shot from that immense source —is only a small *drop*, derived from that inexhaustible ocean—of all good.

What a surprising *variety* is observable among the flowery tribes! How has the bountiful hand of Providence diversified these nicest pieces of his workmanship; added the charms of an endless novelty to all their other perfections! A constant uniformity would soon render the entertainment tiresome or insipid; therefore every species is formed on a separate plan, and exhibits something entirely *new*. The fashion spreads not from family to family; but every one has a mode of its own, which is truly original. The most cursory glance perceives an apparent difference, as well as a peculiar delicacy, in the *airs* and *habits*, the *attitude* and *lineaments*, of every distinct class.

Some rear their heads with a majestic mien, and overlook, like *sovereigns* or *nobles*, the whole parterre. Others seem more moderate in their aims, and advance only to the middle stations; a genius turned for heraldry might term them the *gentry* of the border; while others, free from all aspiring views, creep unambitiously on the ground, and look like the *commonalty* of the kind. Some are intersected with elegant *stripes*, or studded with radiant *spots*. Some affect to be genteelly *powdered*, or neatly *fringed:* while others are plain in their aspect, unaffected in their dress, and content to please with a naked *simplicity*. Some assume the monarch's *purple;* some look most becoming in the virgin's *white;* but *black*, doleful black, has no admits into the wardrobe of Spring. The weeds of mourning would be a manifest indecorum, when nature holds an universal festival. She would now inspire none but delightful ideas; and therefore always makes her appearance in some amiable suit. Here *stands* a warrior, clad with crimson; there *sits* a magistrate, robed in scarlet; and yonder struts

a pretty fellow, that seems to have dipped his plumes in the rainbow, and glitters in all the gay colours of that resplendent arch. Some *rise* into a curious cup, or *fall* into a set of beautiful bells. Some *spread* themselves in a swelling tuft, or *crowd* into a delicious cluster. In some, the predominant stain softens by the gentlest *diminutions*, till it has even stole away from itself: the eye is amused at the agreeable delusion; and we wonder to find ourselves insensibly decoyed into a quite different lustre. In others, you would think the fine tinges were emulous of pre-eminence. Disdaining to mingle, they *confront* one another with the resolution of rivals, determined to dispute the prize of beauty; while each is improved by the opposition into the highest vivacity of complexion.

How manifold are thy works, O Lord! multiplied even to a prodigy. Yet *in wisdom*, consummate wisdom, *hast thou made them all.* How I admire the *vastness* of the contrivance, and the *exactness* of the execution! Man, feeble man, with difficulty accomplishes a single work. Hardly, and after many efforts, does he arrive at a tolerable imitation of some one production of nature. But the Almighty Artist spoke millions of substances into instantaneous being, the whole collection wonderfully various, and each individual completely perfect. Repeated experiments generally, I might say, always, discover errors or defects in *our* happiest inventions. Nay, what wins our approbation at the present hour, or in this particular place, is very probably, in some remote period, or some distant clime, treated with contempt. Whereas, *these* fine structures have pleased every state, in every country, for almost six thousand years. Nor has any fault been detected in the original plan, nor any room left for the least

improvement upon the first model. All our performances, the more *minutely* they are scanned, the more *imperfect* they appear. With regard to these delicate objects, the more we search into their properties, the more we are ravished with their graces. They are sure to disclose fresh strokes of the most masterly skill, in proportion to the attention with which they are examined.

Nor is the *simplicity* of the *operation* less astonishing than the accuracy of the workmanship, or the infinitude of the effects. Should you ask, "Where and what are the materials which beautify the blooming world? What rich tints, what splendid dyes, what stores of shining crayons, stand by the Heavenly Limner when he paints the robe of nature?" 'Tis answered, His powerful pencil needs no such costly apparatus. A single principal, under his conducting hand, branches out into an immensity of the most varied and most finished forms. The *moisture* of the earth and of the circumambient air, passed through proper strainers, and disposed in a range of pellucid tubes; this performs all the wonders, and produces all the beauties of vegetation. This *creeps* along the fibres of the low-spread moss, and *climbs* to the very tops of the lofty-waving cedars. This, attracted by the root, and circulating through invisible canals; this bursts into gems, expands itself into leaves, and clothes the forest with all its verdant honours. This one *plain* and *simple* cause gives birth to all the charms which deck the youth and maturity of the year. This *blushes* in the early hepatica, and *flames* in the late advancing poppy. This *reddens* into blood in the veins of the mulberry, and *attenuates* itself into leafen gold, to create a covering for the quince. This *breathes* in all the fragrant gales of our garden,

and *weeps* odorous gum in the groves of *Arabia*. So *wonderful* is our Creator *in counsel*, and so *excellent in working!*

In a grove of tulips, or a knot of pinks, one perceives a difference in almost every individual. Scarce any two are turned and tinctured exactly alike. Each allows himself a little *particularity* in his *dress*, though all belong to one family: so that they are various, and yet the same. A pretty emblem this, of the *smaller differences* between Protestant Christians. There are modes in religion which admit of variation, without prejudice to sound faith or real holiness; just as the drapery on these pictures of the spring may be formed after a variety of patterns, without blemishing their beauty or altering their nature. Be it so then, that in some points of inconsiderable consequence several of our brethren dissent; yet let us all live amicably and sociably together, for we harmonize in *principals* though we vary in *punctilios*. Let us join in conversation, and intermingle interests; discover no estrangement of behaviour, and cherish no alienation of affection. If any strife subsists, let it be to follow our divine Master most closely in humility of heart and unblameableness of life: let it be to serve one another most readily in all the kind offices of a cordial friendship. Thus shall we be *united*, though *distinguished;* united in the same grand fundamentals, though distinguished by some small circumstantials; united in one important bond of brotherly love, though distinguished by some slighter peculiarities of sentiment.

Between Christians, whose judgments disagree only about a form of prayer or manner of worship, I apprehend there is no more *essential* difference than between flowers which bloom from the same

kind of seed, but happen to be somewhat diversified in the mixture of their colours. Whereas, if *one* denies the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and degrades the incarnate God to the meanness of a mere creature; if *another* cries up the worthiness of human works, and depreciates the alone meritorious righteousness of the glorious Mediator; if a *third* addresses the incommunicable honours to a finite being, and bows to the image, or prays to the saint—these are errors extremely derogatory to the Redeemer's dignity, and not a little prejudicial to the comfort of his people. Against these to remonstrate, against these to urge every argument and use every dissuasive, bespeaks not the censorious bigot, but the friend of truth and the lover of mankind. Whereas, to stand neuter and silent, while such principles are propagated, would be an instance of criminal remissness rather than of Christian moderation. For the *persons*, we will not fail to maintain a tender compassion; we will not cease to put up earnest intercessions; we will also acknowledge and love whatever is excellent and amiable in their character: yet we dare not subscribe their *creed;* we cannot remit our assiduous but kind endeavours, if by any means we may reconcile them to a more *Scriptural* belief and a *purer* worship.

Another circumstance recommending and endearing the flowery creation, is their *regular succession.* They make not their appearance all at once, but in an orderly rotation. While a proper number of these obliging retainers are in waiting, the others abscond; but hold themselves in a posture of service, ready to take their turn, and fill each his respective station the instant it becomes vacant.—The *snow-drop*, foremost of the lovely train, breaks

her way through the frozen soil, in order to present her early compliments to her lord: dressed in the robe of innocency, she steps forth, fearless of danger, long before the trees have ventured to unfold their leaves, even while the icicles are pendent on our houses.—Next peeps out the *crocus;* but cautiously, and with an air of timidity. She hears the howling blasts, and skulks close to her low situation. Afraid she seems to make large excursions from her root, while so many ruffian winds are abroad, and scouring along the ether.—Nor is the *violet* last in this shining embassy of the year; which, with all the embellishments that would grace a royal garden, condescends to line our hedges, and grow at the feet of briers. Freely, and without any solicitations, she distributes thesbounty of her emissive sweets; while herself, with an exemplary humility, retires from sight, seeking rather to administer pleasure than to win admirations—emblem, expressive emblem, of those *modest* virtues, which delight to bloom in obscurity, which extend a cheering influence to multitudes who are scarce acquainted with the source of their comforts! motive, engaging motive, to that *ever-active* beneficence, which stays not for the importunity of the distressed, but anticipates their suit, and prevents them with the blessings of its goodness!—The poor *polyanthus*, that lately adorned the border with her sparkling beauties, and, transplanted into our windows, gave us a fresh entertainment, is now no more. I saw her complexion fade, I perceived her breath decay, till at length she expired, and dropped into her grave. Scarce have we sustained this loss, but in comes the *auricula*, and more than retrieves it. Arrayed she comes, in a splendid variety of amiable forms; with an eye of crystal, and gar-

ments of the most glossy satin; exhaling perfume, and powdered with silver. A very distinguished procession this! the favourite care of the florist! Scarce one among them but is dignified with a character of renown, or has the honour to represent some celebrated toast. But these also, notwithstanding their illustrious titles, have exhausted their whole stock of fragrance, and are mingled with the meanest dust.—Who could forbear grieving at their departure, did not the *tulips* begin to raise themselves on their fine wands or stately stalks? They flush the parterre with one of the gayest dresses that blooming nature wears. Did ever *beau* or *belle* make so gaudy an appearance in a birth-night suit? Here one may behold the innocent wantonness of beauty. Here she indulges a thousand freaks, and sports herself in the most charming diversity of colours. Yet I should wrong her were I to call her a *coquette*, because she plays her lovely changes, not to enkindle dissolute affections, but to display her Creator's glory.—Soon arises the *anemone*, encircled at the bottom with a spreading robe, and rounded at the top into a beautiful dome. In its lossely flowing mantle, you may observe a noble negligence: in its gently-bending tufts, the nicest symmetry. I would term it the *fine gentlemen* of the garden, because it seems to have learned the singular address of uniting simplicity with refinement, of reconciling art and ease. The same month has the merit of producing the *ranunculus*. All bold and graceful, it expands the riches of its foliage, and acquires by degrees the loveliest enamel in the world. As persons of intrinsic worth disdain the superficial arts of recommendation practised by *fops*, so this lordly flower scorns to borrow any of its excellence from powders and essences. It needs no

such attractives to render it the darling of the curious, being sufficiently engaging from the elegance of its figure, the radiant variety of its tinges, and a certain superior dignity of aspect.—Methinks nature improves in her operations. Her latest strokes are most masterly. To crown the collection, she introduces the *carnation* which captivates every eye with a noble spread of graces, and charms another sense with a profusion of exquisite odours. This single flower has centered in itself the perfections of all the preceding. The moment it appears, it so commands our attention that we scarce regret the absence of the rest. The *gilly-flower*, like a real friend, attends you through all the vicissitudes and alterations of the season: while others make a transient visit only; this is rather an inhabitant than a guest in your gardens; adds *fidelity* to *complaisance*.

It is in vain to attempt a catalogue of these amiable gifts. There is an endless *multiplicity* in their characters, yet an invariable *order* in their approaches. Every month, almost every week, has its peculiar ornaments; not servilely copying the works of its predecessor, but forming, still forming, and still executing, some new design. So lavish is the fancy, yet so exact is the process of nature.

Here let me stand a while to contemplate this *distribution* of flowers through the several periods of the year. Were they all to blossom together, there would be at once a promiscuous *throng*, and at once a total *privation*. We should scarce have an opportunity of adverting to the dainty qualities of half, and must soon lose the agreeable company of them all. But now, since every species has a separate post to occupy, and a distinct interval for

appearing, we can take a leisurely and minute survey of each succeeding set. We can view and review their forms, enter into a more intimate acquaintance with their charming accomplishments, and receive all those pleasing services which they are commissioned to yield. This remarkable piece of economy is productive of another very valuable effect: it not only places, in the most advantageous light, every particular community, but is also a sure provisionary resource against the frailty of the whole nation: or, to speak more truly, it renders the flowery tribes a sort of *immortal* corps. For though some are continually dropping, yet by this expedient others are continually rising, to beautify our borders, and prolong the entertainment.

What *goodness* is this, to provide such a series of gratifications for mankind! both to diversify, and perpetuate, the fine collation! to take care that our paths should be in a manner incessantly strewed with flowers! And what *wisdom*, to bid every one of these insensible beings know the precise juncture for their coming forth! insomuch that no actor on a stage can be more exact in performing his part, can make a more regular entry, or a more punctual exit.

Who emboldens the *daffodil* to venture abroad in *February*, and to trust her flowering gold with inclement and treacherous skies? Who informs the various tribes of *fruit-bearing blossoms*, that vernal suns and a more genial warmth are fittest for their delicate texture? Who teaches the *clove* to stay till hotter beams are prepared, to infuse a spicy richness into her odours, and tincture her complexion with the deepest crimson? Who disposes these beautiful troops into such orderly bodies; *retarding* some, and *accelerating* others?

Who has instructed them to *file off* with such perfect regularity, as soon as the duty of their respective station is over? And, when one detachment retires, who gives the signal for another immediately to *advance?* Who, but that unerring Providence, which, from the highest thrones of angels to the very lowest degrees of existence, orders all things in "number, weight, and measure!"

These, O my soul, are the regulations of that most adorable, and most beneficent Being, who bowed the heavens, came down to dwell on earth, and united the *frailty* of thy mortal nature to all the *glories* of his Godhead. All the honour of this admirable establishment belongs to thy Ransom, thy Surety, thy Saviour. To Him it belongs, who sustained the *vengeance* which thou hadst deserved and wast doomed to suffer; who fulfilled the *obedience* which thou wast obliged, but unable, to perform; and who humbled himself (stupendous, ineffable loving kindness!) humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross. He formed this vast machine, and adjusted its nice dependencies. The pillars that support it, the embellishments that adorn it, and the laws that govern it, are the result of his unsearchable counsels. O! the *heights* of his majesty, and the *depths* of his abasement!

Which shall we admire most, his essential *greatness*, or his free *grace?* He created the exalted seraph that sings in glory; and even the minutest insect, that flutters in air or crawls in dust. He marks out a path for all those globes of light which travel the circuit of the skies, and disdains not to rear the violet from its lowly bed, or to plait the daisy which dresses our plains. So *grand* are his operations, yet so *condescending* his regards! If summer, like a sparkling bride, is brilliant and glo-

rious in her apparel, what is this but a feeble reflection of his uncreated *effulgence?* If autumn, like a munificent host, opens her stores, and gives us all things richly to enjoy, what is this but a little taste of his inexhaustible *liberality?* If thunders roar, you hear the sound of his trumpet: if lightnings glare, you see the launching of his glittering spear; "if the perpetual hills be scattered, and the everlasting mountains bowed," you behold a *display*—no says the prophet, you have rather *the hiding of his power.* So immense is his power, so uncontrollable and inconceivable, that all these mighty works are but a *sketch*, in which more is concealed than discovered.

Thus, I think, we should always view the visible system, with an evangelical *telescope* (If I may be allowed the expression,) and with an evangelical *microscope*, regarding Christ Jesus as the great projector and architect who planned and executed the amazing scheme. Whatever is magnificent or valuable, tremendous or amiable, should ever be ascribed to the Redeemer. This is the Christian's *natural philosophy.* With regard to this method of considering the things that are seen, we have an inspired apostle for our preceptor and precedent. Speaking of Christ, he says, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands." Did we carefully attend to this leading principle in all our examinations of nature, it would doubtless be a most powerful means of *enkindling* our love, and *strengthening* our faith. When I look round upon millions of noble substances, and carry with me this transporting reflection, "The Maker of them all, expired on a cross for me;" how can I remain any longer indifferent? Must not the *coldest* heart

begin to glow with gratitude? When I survey an immensity of the finest productions imaginable, and remember that the Author of them all is my "righteousness and my redemption;" how can I choose but repose the most *cheerful* confidence in such a Mediator?

Let me add one more remark upon the admirable *adjustment* of every particular relating to these fine colonies planted in the parterre. With such accuracy and correctness is their structure finished, that any, the least conceivable alteration would very much impair their perfection. Should you see, for instance, the nice disposition of the *tulip's* attire fly abroad, disorderly and irregular, like the flaunting *woodbine;* should *the jessamine* rear her diminutive head on those grand columns which support the *hollihock;* should the erect and manly aspect of the *piony* hang down with a pensive air, like the flexible bells of *the hyacinth;* should that noble plainness which distinguishes the *lily*, be exchanged for the glittering fringes which edge the *pink*, or the gaudy stains which bedrop the *iris;* should those tapering pillars which arise in the middle of its vase, and tipped with golden pendants, give such a lustre to the surrounding pannels of alabaster—should those sink and disappear, like the chives which cover the heart of the anemone; in many of these cases, would not the transposition be fantastical and awkward? in all, to the apparent *prejudice* of every individual?

Again, with regard to the *time* of their appearing, this circumstance is settled by a remarkable foresight and precaution. What would become of the *sailor*, if in very stormy weather he should raise a lofty mast, and crowd it with all his canvass! Such would be the ill effect, if the most stately spe-

cies of flowers should presume to come abroad in the blustering months! Ah! how would they rue the imprudent boldness! Therefore those only that shoot the shortest stems, and display the smallest spread of leaves, or (if you please) carry the least sail, are launched amidst the blowing seasons. How injudiciously would the *perfumer* act, if he should unseal his finest essences, and expose them to the northern winds or wintry rains! Our blooming artists of the aromatic profession, at least the most delicate among them, seem perfectly aware of the consequences of such a procedure. Accordingly, they postpone the opening of their odoriferous treasures, till a serener air, and more unclouded skies, grant a protection to their amiable traffic; till they are under no more apprehensions of having their spicy cells rifled by rude blasts, or drowned in incessant showers.

What a striking argument is here for *resignation*, unfeigned resignation, to all the disposals of *Providence!* Too often are our dissatisfied thoughts apt to find fault with divine dispensations. We tacitly arraign our Maker's conduct, or question his kindness with regard to ourselves. We fancy our lot not so commodiously situated, or our condition not so happily circumstanced, as if we had been placed in some other station of life. But let us behold this exquisitely nice regulation of the *minutest* plants, and be ashamed of our *repining* folly. Could any fibre in their composition be altered, or one line of their features be transposed, without clouding some of their beauties? Could any fold in their vestments be varied, or any link in their orderly succession be broken, without injuring some delicate property? And does not that All-seeing Eye, which preserves so exact a harmony among these *pretty toys*, main-

tain as watchful a care over his *rational creatures?* Does he choose the properest season for the cowslip to arise and drink the dews, and can he neglect the concerns, or misjudge the conveniencies, of his sons and daughters? He, who has so completely disposed whatever pertains to the vegetable economy, that the least diminution or addition would certainly hurt the finished schemes, does, without all peradventure, preside with equal attention over the interests of his own people.

Be still, then, thou uneasy mortal: know that God is unerringly wise; and be assured that amidst the greatest multiplicity of beings, he does not overlook thee. Thy Saviour has given me authority to assert, that thou art of far superior value, in the estimate of Omnipotence, than all the herbage of the field. If his sacred will ordains *sickness* for thy portion, never dare to imagine that uninterrupted health would be more advantageous. If he pleases to withhold or take away *children*, never presume to conclude that thy happiness is blasted, because thy hopes of an increasing family are disappointed. He that marshals all the starry host, and so accurately arranges every, the meanest species of herbs, he orders all the *peculiarities*, all the changes of thy state, with a vigilance that nothing can elude, with a goodness that endureth for ever. Bow thy head, therefore, in humble acquiescence. Rest satisfied, that *whatever is* by the appointment of Heaven, *is right*, is best.

Among all the productions of the third creating-day, this of flowers seem to be peculiarly designed for man. Man has the *monopoly* of this favour: it is conferred on him by a sort of exclusive charter. See the *imperial crown*, splendid and beautifully grand! See the *tuberose*, delicate and languishing-

ly fair! See all the pomp and glory of the parterre where paint and perfume do wonders. Yet the inferior animals are neither smit with their beauties, nor regaled with their odours. The horse never stands still to gaze upon their charms, nor does the ox turn aside to browse upon their sweets. Senses they have to discern these curious objects in their *gross*, but no taste to *distinguish* or relish their fine accomplishments. Just so, carnal and unenlightened men may understand the literal meaning of Scripture, may comprehend the evidences of its divine inspiration; yet have no ardent *longing* for the spiritual blessings it offers, see "no form nor comeliness" in the Saviour it describes, so as to render him the *supreme* desire of their souls.

The *chief* end of these beautiful appearances, philosophers say, is to unfold and cherish the embryo seed, or to swathe the tender body during its infant state. But whatever is the chief end of nature, 'tis certain she never departs from the design of administering *delight* to mankind. This is inseparably connected with her other views. Were it only to secure a reproductive principle, what need of such *elegant complications?* Why so much art employed, and so many decorations added? Why should vestments be prepared richer than brocades, more delicate than lawns, and of a finer glow than the most admired velvets? If the great mother had no other aim than barely to accommodate her little offspring, warm flannel or homely fustian would have served her turn; served it full as well as the most sumptuous tissues, or all the furniture of the mercer's shop.

Evident then it is, that flowers were endued with such enchanting graces for the *pleasure* of *man*. In pursuance of this original intention, they have

always paid their court to the human race; they still seem particularly solicitous of recommending themselves to our regard. The finest of each species crowd about our habitations, and are rarely to be seen at a distance from our abodes. They *thrive* under our cultivating hand and observing eye, but degenerate and *pine-away* if unregarded by their lord. To win his attention, and deck his retreats, they hide their deformities under ground, and display nothing but the most *graceful* forms and *engaging* colours to his sight. To merit a farther degree of his esteem, the generality of them dispense a delightful perfume. What is still more obliging, they reserve their *richest* exhalations to embalm his morning and evening walks. Because he usually chooses those cool hours to recreate himself among their blooming ranks, therefore at those hours they are most lavish of their fragrance, and breathe out their choicest spirits.

O man, greatly beloved by thy Creator! the darling of Providence! thou art distinguished by *his goodness;* distinguish thyself also by *thy gratitude.* Be it thy one undivided aim to glorify Him who has been at so much expense to gratify thee!—While all these inferior creatures, in *silent* eloquence, declare the glory of God, do thou lend them thy *tongue.* Be thou the high priest of the mute creation. Let their praises become vocal in thy songs. Adore the Supreme Benefactor for the blessings he showers down upon every order of beings. Adore him for numberless mercies which are appropriated to thyself. But, above all, adore him for that noble gift of a *rational* and *immortal* soul. This constitutes us masters of the globe, and gives us the real enjoyment of its riches: this discovers ten thousand beauties, which otherwise had been lost, and renders them both a source of delight and

a nursery of devotion. By virtue of this exalted principle, we are qualified to admire our Maker's works, and capable of *bearing* his illustrious *image:* bearing his illustrious image, not only when these ornaments of the ground have resigned their honours, but when the great origin of day is extinguished in the skies, and all the flaming orbs on high are put out in obscure darkness. *Then* to survive, to survive the ruins of one world, and to enjoy God —to resemble God—to be "filled with all the fulness of God," in another—what a happiness, what an inestimable happiness, is this! Yet *this* is thy privilege, (barter it not, for trifles of an hour!) this thy glorious prerogative, O man!

O! the goodness, the *exuberant goodness* of our God! I cannot forbear celebrating it once more, before I pass to another consideration.—How much should we think ourselves obliged to a generous friend, who should build a stately edifice purely for our abode! But how greatly would the obligation be increased, if the hand that built should also *furnish* it! and not only furnish it with all that is commodious and comfortable, but *ornament* it also with whatever is splendid and delightful!—*this* has our most indulgent Creator done, in a manner infinitely surpassing all we could wish or imagine.

The *earth* is assigned us for a dwelling. The *skies* are stretched over us like a magnificent canopy, dyed in the purest azure; and beautified, now with pictures of floating silver, now with colourings of reflected crimson. The *grass* is spread under us as a spacious carpet, wove with silken threads of green, and damasked with flowers of every hue. The *sun*, like a golden lamp, is hung out in the ethereal vault; and pours his effulgence all the day to enlighten our paths. When night approaches,

the *moon* takes up the friendly office ; and the *stars* are kindled in twinkling myriads, to cheer the darkness with their milder lustre, not disturb our repose by too intense a glare. The *clouds*, besides the rich paintings they hang around the heavens, act the part of a shifting screen; and defend us, by their seasonable interposition, from the scorching beams of summer. May we not also regard them as the great watering pots of the globe: which wafted on the wings of the wind, dispense their moisture evenly through the universal garden ; and fructify, with their showers, whatever our hand plants. The *fields* are our exhaustless granary. The *ocean* is our vast reservoir. The *animals* spend their strength to despatch our business, resign their clothing to replenish our wardrobe, and surrender their lives to provide for our tables. In short, every *element* is a storehouse of conveniences, every *season* brings us the choicest productions, all *nature* is our caterer; and, which is a most endearing recommendation of these favours, they are all as lovely as they are useful. You observe nothing mean or inelegant. All is clad in *beauty's* fairest robe, and regulated by *proportion's* nicest rule. The whole scene exhibits a fund of pleasure to the imagination, at the same time that it more than supplies all our wants.

Therefore thou art *inexcusable*, O man, whosoever thou art, that *rebellest* against thy Maker. He surrounds thee with unnumbered benefits, and follows thee with an effusion of the richest, noblest gifts. He courts thy affections, he solicits thy gratitude by liberalities which are never intermitted ; by a bounty which knows no limits.—Most blessed Lord, let this thy goodness, thy unwearied goodness, lead us to repentance. *Win* us to thyself, thou Foun-

tain of Felicity, by these sweet inducements. *Draw* us to our duty, thou God of our Salvation, by these "cords of love."

What a living picture is here of the *beneficial* effects of *industry!* By industry and cultivation, this neat spot is an image of *Eden*. Here is all that can entertain the eye, or regale the smell. Whereas, without cultivation, this sweet garden had been a desolate wilderness. Vile thistles had made it loathsome, and tangling briars inaccessable. Without cultivation it might have been a nest for serpents, and the horrid haunt of venemous creatures. But the spade and pruning-knife, in the hand of industry, have improved it into a sort of terrestrial paradise.

How naturally does this lead our contemplation to the advantages which flow from a virtuous *education*, and the miseries which ensue from the *neglect* of it! The mind, without early instruction, will in all probability become like the "vineyard of the sluggard:" if left to the propensities of its own depraved will, what can we expect but the most luxuriant growth of unruly appetites, which in time will break forth into all manner of scandalous irregularities? What,—but that *anger*, like a prickly thorn, arm the temper with an untractable moroseness: *peevishness*, like a stinging nettle, render the conversation irksome and forbidding: *avarice*, like some choking weed, teach the fingers to gripe, and the hands to oppress: *revenge*, like some poisonous plant, replete with baneful juices, rankle in the breast, and meditate mischief to its neighbour: while unbridled *lusts*, like swarms of noisome insects, taint each rising thought; and render "every imagination of the heart only evil continually?" Such are the usual products of savage nature; such the furniture of the uncultivated soul!

Whereas let the mind be put under the "nurture and admonition of the Lord:" let holy discipline clear the soil: let sacred instruction sow it with the best seed: let skill and vigilance dress the rising shoots, direct the young ideas how to spread, the wayward passions how to move: then what a different state of the inner man will quickly take place! *Charity* will breathe her sweets, and *hope* expand her blossoms; the *personal* virtues display their graces, and the *social* ones their fruits; the sentiments become generous, the carriage endearing, the life honourable and useful.

O! that governors of *families* and masters of *schools* would watch with a conscientious solicitude over the morals of their tender charge! What pity it is, that the advancing generation should lose these invaluable endowments through any supineness in their instructors! See! with what assiduity the *curious florist* attends his little nursery! He visits them early and late; furnishes them with the properest mould: supplies them with seasonable moisture; guards them from the ravages of insects: screens them from the injuries of the weather; marks their springing buds; observes them attentively through their whole progress: and never intermits his anxiety till he beholds them blown into full perfection. And shall a range of *painted leaves*, which flourish to-day, and to-morrow fall to the ground—shall these be tended with more zealous application, than the exalted faculties of an *immortal* soul?

Yet trust not in cultivation *alone*. It is the blessing of the Almighty Husbandman, which imparts *success* to such labours of love. If God "seal up the bottles of heaven," and command the clouds to withhold their fatness, the best-manured plot be-

comes a barren desert. And if He restrain the dew of his heavenly benediction, all human endeavours miscarry; the rational plantation languishes; our most pregnant hopes, from youths of the most promising genius, prove abortive. *Their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will go up as dust.* Therefore, let *parents* plant; let *tutors* water; but let both look up to the Father of *spirits* for the desired increase.

On every side, I espy several *budding* flowers. As yet, they are like bales of cloth from the packer's warehouse: each is wrapped within a strong enclosure, and its contents are tied together by the firmest bandages; so that all their beauties lie concealed, and all their sweets are locked up. Just such is the *niggardly* wretch, whose aims are all turned inward, and meanly terminated upon *himself;* who makes his own private interests or personal pleasures the sole centre of his designs, and the scanty circumference of his actions.

Ere long the searching beams will open these silken folds, and draw them into a graceful *expansion.* Then, what a lovely blush will glow in their cheeks, and what a balmy odour exhale from their bosoms! So, when divine grace shines upon the mind, even *the churl becomes bountiful;* the heart of stone is taken away, and a heart of flesh, a heart susceptible of the softest, most compassionate emotions, is introduced in its stead. O! how sweetly do the social affections dilate themselves under so benign an influence! just like these disclosing gems under the powerful eye of day. The tender regards are no longer *confined* to a single object; but *extend* themselves into a generous concern for mankind, and shed liberal refreshments on all within their reach.

Arise then, thou Sun of Righteousness; arise with healing under thy wings; and transfuse thy gentle but penetrating ray through all our intellectual powers. Enlarge every *narrow* disposition, and fill us with a a *diffusive* benevolence. Make room in our breasts for the whole human race; and teach us to love all our fellow creatures, for their amiable Creator's sake. May we be pleased with their excellencies, and rejoice in their happiness: but feel their miseries as our own, and with a brother's sympathy hasten to relieve them!

Disposed at proper distances, I observe a range of strong and *stately stalks.* They stand like towers along the walls of a fortified city, or rise like lofty spires amidst the group of houses. They part at the top, into several pensile, spiky pods, from each of which we shall soon see a fine figure displaying itself, *rounded* into a form which constitutes a perfect circle, *spread wide* open into the most frank and communicative air; and tinged with the colour which is so peculiarly captivating to the miser's eye.

But the property I chiefly admire, is its passionate *fondness* for the *sun.* When the evening shades take place, the poor flower droops, and folds up its leaves. It mourns all the long night, and pines amidst the gloom, like some forlorn lover banished from the object of his affections. No sooner does Providence open "the eyelids of the morning," but it meets and welcomes the returning light, courts and caresses it all the day, nor ever loses sight of the refulgent charmer so long as he continues above the horizon! In the morning, you may perceive it presenting a golden bosom to the east; at noon it points upward to the middle sky; in the evening follows the same attractive influence to the west.

Surely nature is a book, and every page rich with sacred hints. To an attentive mind the *garden* turns *preacher*, and its blooming tenants are so many lively sermons. What an engaging pattern, and what an excellent lesson have we here!—*So* let the redeemed of the Lord *look unto Jesus*, and be conformed to their Beloved. Let us all be *heliotropes* (if I may use the expression) to the *Sun of Righteousness;* let our passions rise and fall, take this course or that, as his word determines, as his holy example guides; let us be so accommodated both to his commanding and providential will, as the wax is turned to the imprinted seal; or, as the aspect of this enamoured flower, to the splendid star which creates our day.

In every *enjoyment*, O thou watchful Christian, look unto Jesus; receive it as proceeding from his love, and purchased by his agonies. In every *tribulation* look unto Jesus; mark his gracious hand, managing the scourge, or mingling the bitter cup; attempering it to a proper degree of severity; adjusting the time of its continuance; and ready to make these seeming disasters productive of real good. In every infirmity and *failing*, look unto Jesus, thy merciful high-priest, pleading his atoning blood, and making intercession for transgressors. In every *prayer* look unto Jesus, thy prevailing advocate, recommending thy devotions, and "bearing the iniquity of thy holy things." In every *temptation* look unto Jesus, the author of thy strength, and captain of thy salvation; who alone is able to lift up the hands which hang down, to invigorate the enfeebled knees, and make thee more than conqueror over all thy enemies. But especially, when the *hour* of thy *departure* approaches; when "thy flesh and thy heart fail;" when all the springs of

life are irreparably breaking; *then* look unto Jesus with a believing eye. Like expiring *Stephen*, behold him standing at the right hand of God, on purpose to succour his people in this their last extremity. Yes, my Christian friend; when thy journey through life is finished, and thou art arrived on the very verge of mortality; when thou art just launching out into the invisible world, and all before thee is vast eternity; then, O then, be sure to look steadfastly unto Jesus! "See by faith the Lord's Christ." View him as the only *way* to the everlasting mansions, as the only *door* to the abodes of bliss.

Yonder tree, which faces the south, has something too remarkable to pass without observation. Like the fruitful though feeble vine, she brings forth a large family of branches; but, unable to support them herself, commits them to the tuition of a sunny wall. As yet the tender twigs have scarce gemmed their future blossoms. However, I may anticipate the well known productions, and picture to myself the *passion-flower;* which will in due time, with a long and copious succession, adorn the boughs.

I have read, in a *Latin* author, of flowers inscribed with the name of kings; but here is one, emblazoned with the marks of the bleeding Prince of life. I read in the inspired writings of apostolic men, who bore about in their bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus; but here is a *blooming religioso* that carries apparent memorials of the same tremendous and fatal catastrophe. Who would have expected to find such a tragedy of wo, exhibited in a collection of the most delicate delights? or to see *Calvary's* horrid scene portrayed on the softest ornaments of the garden? Is nature then actuated by the noble ambition of paying *commemorative* hon-

ours to her agonizing Sovereign? Is she kindly officious to *remind* forgetful mortals of that miracle of mercy, which it is their duty to contemplate, and their happiness to believe? Or is a *sportive* imagination my interpreter, and all the supposed resemblance no more than the precarious gloss of fancy? Be it so; yet even fancy has her merit, when she sets forth in such pleasing imagery the crucified Jesus! Nor shall I refuse a willing regard to imagination herself, when she employs her creative powers to revive the sense of such unparralleled love, and prompt my gratitude to so divine a Friend.

That *spiral tendril*, arising from the bottom of the stalk, is it a representation of the *scourge* which lashed the Redeemer's unspotted flesh, and inflicted those stripes by which our souls are healed? Or is it twisted for the *cord* which bound his hands, in painful and ignominious confinement—those beneficent hands, which were incessantly stretched out to unloose the heavy burdens, and to impart blessings of every choice kind? Behold the *nails* which were drenched in his sacred veins, and rivetted his feet to the accursed tree—those beautiful feet, which always went about doing good, and travelled far and near to spread the glad tidings of everlasting salvation. See the *hammer* ponderous and massy, which drove the rugged irons through the shivering nerves, and forced a passage for those dreadful wedges between the dislocated bones. View the *thorns* which encircled our royal Master's brow, and shot their keen afflictive points into his blessed head. O the smart! the racking smart! when, instead of the triumphal laurel, or the odoriferous garland, that pungent and ragged wreath was planted on the meek Messiah's forehead! when violent and barbarous blows of the strong Eastern cane

struck the prickly crown, and fixed every thorn deep in his throbbing temples! There stand the *disciples*, ranged in the green impalement, and forming a circle round the instruments of their great commander's death. They appear like so many faithful adherents, who breathe a gallant resolution, either of defending their Lord to the last extremity, or of dropping honourably by his side. But did they give such proofs of zeal and fidelity in their conduct, as their steady posture and determined aspect seem to promise? Alas! what is all human firmness, when destitute of succours from above, but an expiring *vapour?* What is every saint, if unsupported by powerful grace, but an abandoned *traitor?* Observe the *glory*, delineated in double rays, grand with imperial purple, and rich with etherial blue. But ah! how incapable are threads, though spun by summer's finest hand, though died in snows, or dipped in heaven, to display the immaculate excellency of his human, or the ineffable majesty of his divine nature! Compared with these sublime perfections, the most *vivid* assemblage of colours fades into an *unmeaning* flatness; the most charming effects of light and shade are only not mere daubings, but an absolute blank.

Among all the beauties which shine in sunny robes, and sip the silver dews, this, I think, has the *noblest import*, if not the *finest presence.* Were they all to pass in review, and expect the award of superiority from my decision, I should not hesitate a moment. Be the prize assigned to this amiable candidate; which has so eminently distinguished and so highly dignified herself, by bearing such a remarkable resemblance to "the righteous Branch; the Plant of renown." While others appoint it

a place in the parterre, I would transplant the passion-flower, or rather transfer its sacred significancy to my heart. *There* let it bloom, both in summer and in winter; bloom in the most impressive characters, and with an undecaying lustre: that I may also wear—wear on my very soul, the traces of *Immanuel*, pierced for my sins, and bruised for my transgressions: that I also may *be crucified with Christ*, at least in penitential remorse, and affectionate sympathy: that I may *know the fellowship of his sufferings;* and feel all my evil affections wounded by his agonies, mortified by his death.

There is another subject of the verdant kingdom, which, on account of its very uncommon qualities, demands my particular notice: one, so extremely diffident in her disposition, and delicate in her constitution, that she dares not venture herself abroad in the open air, but is nursed up in the warmth of a *hot-bed*, and lives cloistered in the cells of a *greenhouse*. But the most curious peculiarity is, that of all her kindred species, she alone partakes of *perceptive* life; at least advances nearest to this more exalted state of being; and may be looked upon as the link which connects the animal and the vegetable world. A stranger, observing her motions, would almost be induced to suspect, that she is indued with some inferior degress of consciousness and caution. For if you offer to handle the *sensitive plant*, she immediately takes an alarm; hastily contracts her fibres; and, like a person under apprehensions of violence, *withdraws* from your finger in a kind of precipitate *disorder*. Perhaps the beauty of her aspect might be sullied, or the niceness of her texture discomposed, by the human touch. Therefore, like a coy virgin, she recedes from all unbecoming familiarities, and will admit no such improper, if not pernicious freedoms.

Whatever be the cause of this unusual effect, it suggests an instructive admonition to the Christian. *Such* should be our apprehensive, timorous care with regard to sin; and all, even the most distant, approaches of vice. *So* should we avoid the very appearance of evil, and stand aloof from every occasion of falling. If sinners entice; if forbidden pleasures tempt; or if opportunity beckon, with the gain of injustice in her hand; O! turn from the gilded snare; touch not the beauteous bane; but fly, fly with haste, fly without any delay, from the bewitching ruin. Does *anger* draw near with her lighted torch, to kindle the flame of resentment in our breasts? Does *flattery* ply our ears with her enchanting and intoxicating whispers? Would *discontent* lay her leaden hand upon our temper, and mould into our minds her sour leaven, in order to make us a burden to ourselves and unamiable to others? Instantly let us divert our attention from the dangerous objects; and not so much endeavour to *antidote*, as to *shun*, the moral contagion. Let us revolve in our meditations that wonderful *meekness* of our distressed Master, which, amidst the most abusive and provoking insults, maintained an uniform tenor of unshaken serenity. Let us contemplate that prodigious *humiliation*, which brought him, from an infinite height above all worlds, to make his bed in the dust of death. Let us soothe our jarring, our uneasy passions, with the remembrance of that *cheerfulness* and *resignation*, which rendered him, in the deepest poverty, unfeignedly thankful, and, under the heaviest tribulations, most submissively patient.

Harbour not, on any consideration, the betrayer of your virtue. Be deaf, inflexibly deaf, to every beguiling solicitation. If it obtrude into the un-

guarded heart, give it entertainment, no, not for a moment. To parley with the enemy, is to open a door for destruction. Our safety consists in flight; and in this case, *suspicion* is the truest *prudence*, *fear* the greatest *bravery*. Play not on the brink of the precipice. Flutter not round the edges of the flame. Dally not with the stings of death: but reject, with a becoming mixture of solicitude and abhorrence, the very first insinuations of iniquity, as cautiously as the *smarting sore* shrinks even from the softest hand; as constantly as this *jealous plant* recoils at the approaching touch.

Not long ago, these curious productions of the spring were *coarse* and mis-shapen roots. Had we opened the earth, and beheld them in their seed, how uncouth and contemptible had their appearance been! But now they are the boast of nature; the delight of the sons of men; finished patterns for enamelling and embroidery, outshining even the happiest strokes of the pencil. They are taught to bloom, but with a very inferior lustre, in the richest tapestries and most magnificent silks. Art never attempts to *equal* their incomparable elegancies, but places all her merit in *copying* after these delicate originals. Even those who glitter in silver, or whose clothing is of wrought gold, are desirous to borrow additional ornaments from a sprig of jessamine, or a little assemblage of pinks.

What a fine idea may we form from hence of the *resurrection* of the *just*, and the state of their reanimated bodies! As the roots even of our choicest flowers, when deposited in the ground, are rude and ungraceful, but when they spring up into blooming life are most elegant and splendid; so the flesh of a saint, when committed to the dust, alas! what is it? A heap of corruption; a mass of putrefying

clay. But, when it obeys the great archangel's call and starts into a new existence; what an astonishing change ensues! What a most ennobling improvement takes place! That which is sown in *weakness*, was raised in all the vivacity of *power*. That which was sown in *deformity*, is raised in the bloom of celestial *beauty*. Exalted, refined, and glorified, it will shine "as the brightness of the firmament," when it darts the inimitable blue through the fleeces—the snowy fleeces of some cleaving cloud.

Fear not then, thou faithful Christian; fear not, at the appointed time, to descend into the tomb. Thy *soul* thou mayst trust with thy omnipotent Redeemer, who is Lord of the unseen world; "who has the keys of hell, and of death." Most safely mayst thou trust thy better part in those beneficent hands which were pierced with nails, and fastened to the ignominious tree, for thy salvation. With regard to thy *earthly tabernacle*, be not dismayed. It is taken down only to be rebuilt upon a diviner plan, and in a more heavenly form. If it retires into the shadow of death, and lies immured in the gloom of the grave, it is only to return from a short confinement to endless liberty. If it falls into dissolution, it is in order to rise more illustrious from its ruins, and wear an infinitely brighter face of perfection and of glory.

Having now made my *panegyric*, let me next take up a *lamentation* for these loveliest productions of the vegetable world. For I foresee their approaching doom. Yet a little while, and all these pleasing scenes vanish. Yet a little while, and all the sweets of the breathing, all the beauties of the blooming spring, are no more. Every one of these amiable forms must be shrivelled to deform-

ity and trodden to the earth. Significant resemblance this, of all created beauty. *All flesh is grass;* like the green herbage, liable and prone to fade. Nay, *all the godliness thereof,* its finest accomplishments, and what the world universally admires, *is as the flower of the field;* which loses its gloss, decays and perishes, more speedily than the grass itself. Behold then, ye brightest among the daughters of *Eve;* behold yourselves in this glass. See the charms of your *person* eclipsed by the lustre of these little flowers; and the frailty of your *state* represented by their transient glories. A fever may scorch those polished veins; a consumption may emaciate the dimpling cheeks; and a load of unexpected sorrows depress those lively spirits. Or should these disasters, in pity, spare the tender frame; yet age, inexorable age and wrinkles, will assuredly come at last; will wither all the fine features, and blast every sprightly grace.

Then, ye *fair*, when those sparkling eyes are darkened, and sink in their orbs; when they are rolling in agonies, or swimming in death, how will you sustain the affliction? how will you repair the loss? Apply your thoughts to *religion*. Attend to the *one thing needful*. Believe in, and imitate the blessed Jesus. Then shall your souls mount up to the realms of happiness, when the well proportioned clay is mingling with its mean original. The light of God's countenance will irradiate, with matchless and consummate perfection, all their exalted faculties. Cleansed entirely from every dreg of corruption, like some unsullied mirror, they will reflect the complete image of their Creator's holiness. Oh! that you would thus *dress* your *minds* and prepare for the immortal state! Then, from shining among your fellow creatures on earth, you

shall be translated to shine around the throne of God. Then, from being the sweeteners of our life, and the delight of our eyes, here below; you shall pass, by an easy transition, into angels of light, and become "an everlasting excellency, the joy of all generations."

Yes; ye flowery nations, ye must all decay. Yonder *lily*, that looks like the queen of the gay creation; see, how gracefully it erects its majestic head! What an air of dignity and grandeur ennobles its aspect! For elevated mein, as well as for incomparable lustre, justly may it be preferred to the magnificent monarch of the East. But, all stately and charming as it is, it will hardly survive a few more days. That unspotted whiteness must quickly be tarnished, and the snowy form defiled in the dust.

As the lily pleases with the noble simplicity of its appearance, the *tulip* is admired for the gayety and multiplicity of its colours. Never was cup, either painted or enamelled, with such a profusion of dye: its tinges are so glowing; its contrasts so strong; and the arrangement of them both, so elegant and artful! 'Twas lately the pride of the border and the reigning beauty of the delightful season. As exquisitely fine as the rainbow, and almost as extremely transient, it spread, for a little moment, its glittering plumage, but has now laid all its variegated and superior honours down. Those radiant stripes are blended, alas! rudely blended, with common mould.

To a graceful shape and blooming complexion, the *rose* adds the most agreeable perfume. Our nostrils make it repeated visits, and are never weary of drinking in its sweets. A fragrance, so peculiarly rich and reviving, transpires from its opening

tufts; that every one covets its acquaintance. How have I seen even the accomplished *Clarissa*, for whom so many votaries languish, fondly caressing this little flower! That lovely bosom, which is the seat of innocence and virtue; whose least excellency it is to rival the delicacy of the purest snows; among a thousand charms of its own, thinks it possible to adopt another from the damask rose bud. Yet even this universal favourite must fail. Its native balm cannot preserve it from putrefaction. Soon, soon, must it resign all those endearing qualities, and hang neglected on its stem, or drop despised to the ground.

One could wish, methinks, these most amiable of the inanimate race a longer existence; but in vain: they *fade* almost as soon as they *flourish;* within less than a month their glories are extinct. Let the sun take a few more journeys through the sky, then visit this enchanting walk, and you will find nothing but a wretched wilderness of ragged or naked stalks—but (my soul exults in the thought) the *garment* of celestial *glory*, which shall ere long array the re-animated body, will never wax old. The illustrious *robes* of a Saviour's consummate *righteousness*, which even now adorn the justified spirits, are incorruptible and immortal. No moth can corrode their texture; no number of ages sully their brightness. The light of day may be quenched, and all the stars sink in obscurity; but the honours of "just men made perfect," are subject to no diminution. Inextinguishable and unfading is the lustre of their crown.

Yes; ye flowery nations, ye must all decay. Winter, like some enraged and irresistable conquerer, that carries fire and sword wherever he advances; that demolishes towns, depopulates coun-

tries, spreads slaughter and desolation on every side —so, just so, will *winter*, with his savage and unrelenting blasts, invade this beautiful prospect. The storms are gathering, and the tempests mustering their rage, to fall upon the vegetable kingdoms. They will ravage through the dominions of nature, and plunder her *riches*, and lay waste her charms. Then, ye trees, must ye stand stripped of your verdant apparel; and, ye fields, be spoiled of your waving treasures. Then the earth, disrobed of all her gay attire, must sit in sables, like a disconsolate widow. The sun too, who now rides in triumph round the world, and scatters gayety from his radiant eye, will then look faintly from the windows of the south; and, casting a short glance on our dejected world, will leave us to the uncomfortable gloom of tedious nights. Then these pretty *choristers* of the *air* will chant no more to the gentle gales; the lark, the linnet, and all the feathered songsters, abandon their notes and indulge their woes. The harmony of the woods is at an end; and silence, (unless it be interrupted by howling winds,) a sullen silence, sits brooding upon the boughs, which are now made vocal by a thousand warbling throats.

But (sweet recollection! ravishing expectation!) the *songs* of *saints* in light never admit a pause for sadness. All heaven will resound with the melody of their gratitude, and all eternity echo to their triumphant acclamations. The *hallelujahs* of that world, and the harmonious joy of its inhabitants, will be as lasting as the divine perfections they celebrate. Come then, holy love, and *tune* my *heart*; descend, celestial fire, and *touch* my *tongue*, that I may stand ready to strike up, and bear my part in that great hosanna, that everlasting hymn.

Yes, yes; ye flowery nations, ye must all decay.

And, indeed, could you add the strength of an oak, or the stability of a pyramid, to all the delicacy of your texture; yet short, exceeding short, even then, would your duration be. For *I see that all things come to an end.* The pillars of nature are tottering. The foundations of the round world are falling away. "The heavens themselves wax old like a garment." But, amidst these views of general ruin, here is our refuge; this is our consolation; *we know that our Redeemer liveth.* Thy years, blessed Jesus, shall not fail. From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art still the same; the same most excellent and adorable person; the same omnipotent and faithful friend; the same all-sufficient and inestimable portion. O! may we but partake of thy merits, be sanctified by thy grace, and received into thy glory! Then perish, if ye will, all inferior delights. Let all that is *splendid* in the skies, expire; and all that is *amiable* in nature, be expunged. Let the whole extent of creation be turned again into one undistinguishable void, one universal blank. Yet, if God be ours, we shall have *enough.* If God be ours, we shall have *all,* and abound; all that our circumstances can want or our wishes crave, to make us inconceivably blessed and happy; blessed and happy, not only through this little interval of time, but through the unmeasurable revolutions of eternity.

The *sun* is now come forth in his strength, and beats fiercely upon my throbbing pulse. Let me retire to yonder inviting *arbour.* There the woodbines retain the lucid drop; there the jessamines, which line the verdant alcove, are still impearled, and deliciously wet with dews. Welcome, ye *refreshing shades!* I feel, I feel, your cheering influence. My languid spirits revive; the slackened

sinews are new strung; and life bounds brisker through all her crimson channels.

Reclined on this mossy couch, and surrounded by this fragrant coldness, let me renew my aspirations to the ever-present Deity. Here, let me remember and imitate the pious *Augustine* and his mother *Monica;* who, being engaged in discourse on the beauties of the visible creation, rose, by these ladders, to the glories of the invisible state; till they were inspired with the most *affecting sense* of their supereminent excellency, and actuated with the most *ardent breathings* after their full enjoyment; insomuch, that they were almost rapt up into the bliss they contemplated; and scarce "knew whether they were in the body, or out of the body."

When *tempests* toss the ocean; when plaintive signals of distress are heard from the bellowing deep; and melancholy tokens of shipwreck come floating on the foaming surge; then how delightful to stand safe on the shore, and hug one's self in conscious security. When a *glut of waters* bursts from some mighty torrent, rushes headlong over all the neighbouring plains, sweeps away the helpless cattle, and drives the affrighted shepherd from his hut; then, from the top of a distant eminence, to descry the danger we need not fear; how pleasing! —Such, methinks, is my *present situation.* For now the sun blazes from on high; the air glows with his fire; the fields are rent with chinks; the roads are scorched to dust; the woods seem to contract a sickly aspect, and a russet hue; the traveller broils as he rides, hastens to his inn, and intermits his journey; the labourer, bathed in sweat, drops the scythe, and desists from his work; the cattle flee to some shady covert, or else pant and toss under the burning noon. Even the stubborn

rock, smit with the piercing beams, is ready to cleave. All things *languish* beneath the dazzling deluge—while I shall enjoy a *cool* hour and *calm* reflection, amidst the gloom of this bowery recess, which scarce admits one speck of sunshine.

Thus, may both the flock and their shepherd *dwell beneath the defence of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* Then though the *pestilence* walketh in darkness, and the *sickness* destroyeth at noon-day; though thousands fall beside us, and ten thousands at our right hand; we need fear no evil. Either the destroying angel shall pass over our houses; or else he shall dispense the corrections of a friend, not the scourges of an enemy; which, instead of hurting us, shall work for our good. Then, though *profaneness* and *infidelity*, far more malignant evils, breathe deadly contagion, and taint the morals of multitudes around us; yet if the great Father of spirits "hide us in the hollow of his hand," we shall hold fast our integrity, and be faithful unto death.

Let then, dearest Lord, O! let thy servant, and the people committed to his care, be received into thy protection. Let us take sanctuary under that *tree of life*, erected in thy ignominious cross. Let us fly for safety to that *city of refuge*, opened in thy bleeding wounds. These shall be a sacred hiding-place, not to be pierced by the flames of divine wrath, or the fiery darts of temptation. Thy dying merits and perfect obedience, shall be to our souls *as rivers of water in a dry place, or as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*

But most of all, in that *last tremendous day*, when the heavens are rent asunder, and wrapped up like a scroll; when thy Almighty arm shall arrest the sun in his career, and dash to pieces the

structure of the universe; when the dead, both small and great, shall be gathered before the throne of thy glory; and the fates of all mankind hang on the very point of a final irreversible decision;—then, blessed Jesus, let us be owned by Thee, and we shall not be *ashamed;* defended by Thee, and we shall not be *afraid.* O! may we, at that awful, that unutterably important juncture, be covered with the wings of thy redeeming love; and, we, shall behold all the horrible convulsions of expiring nature, with composure, with comfort! We shall even welcome the dissolution of all things, as the *times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*

There are, I perceive, who still attend the flowers; and, in defiance of the sun, ply their work on every expanded blossom. The *bees* I mean; that nation of chymists, to whom nature has communicated the rare and valuable secret, of enriching themselves without impoverishing others; who extract the most delicious syrup from every fragrant herb, without wounding its substance, or diminishing its odours. I take the more notice of these ingenious operations, because I would willingly make them my pattern. While the gay *butterfly* flutters her painted wings, and sips a little fantastic delight only for the present moment; while the gloomy *spider*, worse than idly busied, is preparing his insidious nets for destruction, or sucking venom, even from the most wholesome plants; this frugal community are wisely employed in providing for futurity, and collecting a copious stock of the most balmy treasures. And O! might these meditations sink into my soul! Would the God who suggested each heavenly thought, vouchsafe to convert it into an *established principle;* to determine all my inclina-

tions, and regulate my whole conduct! I should then gather advantages from the same blooming objects, more precious than your golden stores, ye industrious artists. I also should go home, laden with the *richest sweets* and the *noblest spoils*; though I crop not a leaf, nor call a single flower my own.

Here I behold assembled in *one view*, almost all the various beauties which have been severally entertaining my imagination. The *vistas*, struck through an ancient wood, or formed by rows of venerable elms conducting the spectator's observation to some remarkable object, or leading the traveller's footsteps to this delightful seat; the *walls* enriched with fruit-trees, and faced with a covering of their leafy extensions; I should rather have said, hung with different pieces of nature's noblest tapestry; the *walks* neatly shorn and lined with verdure, or finely smoothed and coated with gravel; the *alleys* arched with shades to embower our noon-tide repose, or thrown open for the free accession of air, to invite us to our evening recreation; the decent *edgings* of box, which enclose, like a plain selvage, each beautiful compartment, and its splendid figures; the shapely *evergreens* and *flowering shrubs*, which strike the eye, and appear with peculiar dignity in this distant situation; the *basin* with its crystal fount floating in the centre, and diffusing an agreeable freshness through the whole; the waters, falling from a remote *cascade*, and gently murmuring as they flow along the pebbles; *these*, added to the rest, and all so disposed, that each recommends and endears each, render the *whole* a most sweet ravishing scene of order and variety, of elegance and magnificence.

From so many lovely prospects clustering upon

the sight, it is impossible not to be reminded of *heaven;* that world of bliss, those regions of light, where the Lamb that was slain manifests his beatific presence, and his saints live for evermore. But O! what pencil can sketch out a draught of that goodly land! What colours or what style can express the splendours of Immanuel's kingdom! Would some celestial hand draw aside the veil but for one moment, and permit us to throw a single glance on those divine abodes; how would all sublunary possessions become tarnished in our eyes, and grow flat upon our taste! A glimpse, a transient glimpse of those unutterable beatitudes, would captivate our souls, and engross all their faculties. *Eden* itself, after such a vision, would appear a cheerless *desert*, and all earthly charms intolerable *deformity.*

Very excellent things are spoken of thee, thou city of God. Volumes have been written, and those by inspired men, to display the wonders of thy perfections. All that is rich and resplendant in the visible creation has been called in to aid our conceptions, and elevate our ideas; but indeed, no tongue can utter, no pen can describe, no fancy can imagine, what God, of his unbounded munificence, has prepared for them that love him. Seeing then that all terrestrial things must come to a speedy end, and there remaineth a rest, a blissful and everlasting rest, for the people of God; let me never be too fondly attached to any present satisfactions. Weaned from whatever is temporal, may I maintain a superior indifference for such transitory enjoyments; but long, long earnestly for the mansions that are above, the paradise "which the Lord hath planted, and not man." Thither may I transmit the chief of my *conversation*, and from

thence expect the whole of my *happiness*. Be that the sacred, powerful magnet which ever influences my heart, ever attracts my affections. *There* are such transcendent glories, as eye has not seen; *there* are such transporting pleasures, as ear has not heard; *there* is such a fulness of joys, as the thought of man cannot conceive.

Into that consummate felicity, those eternal fruitions, permit me Madam, to wish you, in due time, an *abundant entrance;* and to assure you that this wish is breathed with the same sincerity and ardour for my honoured correspondent, as it is, Madam, for

Your most obedient, &c.

J HERVEY.

A DESCANT

UPON

CREATION.

With joy, with grief, that healing hand I see;
The *Skies* it form'd, and yet it *bled* for me.
NIGHT THOUGHTS. No. IV

A DESCANT

UPON

CREATION.

To know the love of Christ; to have such a deep apprehension of his unspeakable kindness, as may produce in our hearts an adoring gratitude and an unfeigned faith; this, according to *St. Paul's* estimate, is the highest and happiest attainment in the sacred science of Christianity. What follows is an attempt to assist the attentive mind in learning a line or two of that best and greatest lesson. It introduces the most conspicuous parts of the visible system, as so many *prompters* to our dull affections; each suggesting a *hint* adapted to the important occasion, and suited to its respective character.

Can there be a more powerful incentive to devout *gratitude*, than to consider the magnificent and delicate scenes of the universe, with a particular reference to Christ as the Creator? Every object, viewed in this light, will surely administer incessant recruits to the languishing lamp of divine love. Every production in nature will strike a spark into the soul, and the whole creation concur to raise the smoking flax into a flame.

Can any thing impart a stronger *joy* to the believer, or more effectually confirm his *faith* in the crucified Jesus, than to behold the heavens declaring his glory, and the firmament showing his handywork? Surely it must be matter of inexpressible consolation to the poor sinner, to observe the hon-

ours of his Redeemer written with sun-beams over all the face of the world.

We delight to read an account of our incarnate Jehovah, as he is revealed in the books of *Moses* and the prophets, as he is displayed in the writings of the evangelists and apostles. Let us also endeavour to see a sketch of his perfections as they stand delineated in that stately volume, where every *leaf* is a spacious plain; every *line*, a flowing brook; every *period*, a lofty mountain.

Should any of my readers be unexercised in such speculations, I beg leave (in pursuance of my promise) to present them with a *specimen*, or to offer a clew, which may possibly lead their minds into this most improving and delightful train of thinking.

Should any be inclined to suspect the solidity of the following observations, or to condemn them as the voice of rant, and the lawless flight of fancy; I must entreat such persons to recollect, that the grand doctrine, the hinge on which they all turn, is warranted and established by the unanimous testimony of the inspired penmen, who frequently celebrate Immanuel, or Christ Jesus, as the great Almighty Cause of all; assuring us, that *all things were created by him and for him, and that in him all things consist.*

On such a subject, what is wonderful is far from being *extravagant.* To be wonderful, is the inseparable characteristic of God and his works, especially of that most distinguished and glorious even of the divine works, redemption; so glorious, that "all the miracles in *Egypt*, and the marvellous acts in the field of *Zoan;* all that the *Jewish* annals have recorded, or the human ear has heard: all dwindle into *trivial events*, are scarce worthy to be *remembered*, in comparison of this infinitely grand,

and infinitely gracious transaction. Kindled, therefore, into pleasing astonishment by such a survey, let me give full scope to my meditations; let me pour out my whole soul on the boundless subject; not much regarding the limits which cold criticism, or colder unbelief, might prescribe.

O ye *angels*, that surround the throne; ye princes of heaven, "that excel in strength," and are clothed with transcendant brightness: He who placed you in those stations of exalted honour, and dignified your nature with such illustrious endowments; He, whom you all obey and all adore; He took not on him the angelic form, but was made flesh, and found in fashion as a man. Like us wretched mortals, he was subject to weariness, pain, and every infirmity, sin only excepted; that we might one day be raised to your sublime abodes, be adopted into your blissful society, and join with your transported choir in giving glory to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb for ever and ever.

O ye *heavens*, whose azure arches rise immensely high, and stretch unmeasurably wide; stupendous amphitheatre! amidst whose vast expansive circuit, orbs of the most dreadful grandeur are perpetually running their amazing races; unfathomable depths of æther! where worlds unnumbered float, and, to our limited sight, worlds unnumbered are lost: He who adjusted your dimensions with his span, and formed the magnificent structure with his word; He was once wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger; that the benefits accruing to his people, through his most meritorious humiliation, might have no other measure of their value than immensity; might run parallel, in their duration, with eternity.

Ye *stars*, that beam with inextinguishable bril-

liancy through the midnight sky; oceans of flame and centres of worlds, though seemingly little points of light: He who shone with essential effulgence, innumerable ages before your twinkling tapers were kindled, and will shine with everlasting majesty and beauty when your places in the firmament shall be known no more; He was involved for many years in the deepest obscurity; lay concealed in the contemptible city *Nazareth;* lay disguised under the mean habit of a carpenter's son; that he might plant the heavens, as it were, with new constellations, and array these clods of earth, these houses of clay, with a radiancy far superior to yours; a radiancy which will adorn the very heaven of heavens, when you shall vanish away like smoke, or expire as momentary sparks from the smitten steel.

Comets, that sometimes shoot into the illimitable tracks of æther, farther than the discernment of our eye is able to follow; sometimes return from the long, long excursion, and sweep our affrighted hemisphere with your enormous fiery train; that sometimes make nearer approaches to the sun, and burn almost in his immediate beams; sometimes retire to the remotest distances and freeze for ages in the excessive rigours of winter: He, who at his sovereign pleasure withdraws the blazing wonder, or leads forth the portentous stranger to shake terror over guilty kingdoms; He was overwhelmed with the most shocking amazement, and plunged into the deepest anxiety; was chilled with apprehensions of fear, and scorched by the flames of avenging wrath; that I, and other depraved rebellious creatures, might not be eternally agitated with the extremes of jarring passions; opposite, yet on either side tormenting; far more tormenting to the soul, than the severest degrees of your heat and cold to the human sense.

Ye *planets*, that, winged with unimaginable speed, traverse the regions of the sky; sometimes climbing millions and millions of miles above, sometimes descending as far below the great axle of your motions; ye that are so minutely faithful to the vicissitudes of day and night, so exactly punctual in bringing on the changes of your respective seasons; He who launched you at first from his mighty arm; who continually impels you with such wonderful rapidity, and guides you with such perfect regularity: who fixes "the habitation of his holiness and his glory," infinite heights above your scanty rounds; He once became a helpless infant, sojourned in our inferior world, fled from the persecutor's sword and wandered as a vagabond in a foreign land; that he might lead our feet into the way of peace; that he might bring us aliens near to God, bring us exiles home to heaven.

Thou *sun*, inexhausted source of light, and heat, and comfort! who, without the assistance of any other fire, sheddest day through a thousand realms, and not confining thy munificence to realms only, extendest thy enlightening influences to surrounding worlds; prime cheerer of the animal, and great enlivener of the vegetable tribes! so beautiful in thyself, so beneficial in thy effects, that erring heathens addressed thee with adorations, and mistook thee for their Maker! He who filled thy orb with a profusion of lustre, before whom thy meridian splendours are but a shade; He divested himself of his all-transcending distinctions, and drew a veil over the effulgence of his divinity; that, by speaking to us face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, he might dispel our intellectual darkness. His "visage was marred," and he became the scorn of men, the outcast of the people; that, by this mani-

festation of his unutterably tender regard for our welfare, he might diffuse many a gleam of joy through our dejected minds; that, in another state of things, he might clothe even our fallen nature with the honours of that magnificent luminary, and give all the righteous to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Thou *moon*, that walkest among the host of stars, and in thy lucid appearance art superior to them all! fair ruler of the night; sometimes half restoring the day with thy waxing brightness; sometimes waning into dimness, and scarcely scattering the nocturnal gloom; sometimes covered with sackcloth, and alarming the gazing nations; He, who dresses thy opaque globe in beaming but borrowed silver; He, whose dignity is unchangeable, underived, and all his own; He vouchsafed to wear a body of clay; he was content to appear as in a bloody eclipse, shorn of his resplendent beams, and surrounded with a night of horror, which knew not one reviving ray. Thus has he empowered his church, and all believers, to tread the moon under their feet. Hence, inspired with the hope of brighter glory and more enduring bliss, are they enabled to triumph over all the vain anxieties, and vainer amusements, of this sublunary, precarious, mutable world.

Ye *thunders*, that, awfully grumbling in the distant clouds, seem to meditate indignation, and form the first essays of a far more frightful peal; or, suddenly bursting over our heads, rend the vault above, and shake the ground below, with the hedious, horrid crack: ye that send your tremendous volleys from pole to pole, startling the savage herds, and astonishing the human race: He, who permits terror to sound her trumpet in your deep, prolonged, enlarging, aggravated roar; He uttered a feeble in-

fantile cry in the stable, and strong expiring groans on the accursed tree; that he might, in the gentlest accents, whisper peace to our souls, and at length tune our voices to the melody of heaven.

O ye *lightnings*, that brood, and lie couchant in the sulphurous vapours; that glance, with forked fury, from the angry gloom, swifter and fiercer than the lion rushes from his den; or open into vast expansive sheets of flame, sublimely waved over the prostrate world, and fearfully lingering in the affrighted skies: ye, that formerly laid in ashes the licentious abodes of lust and violence: that will, ere long, set on fire the elements, and co-operate in the conflagration of the globe: He who kindles your flash, and directs you when to sally, and where to strike; He, who commissions your whirling bolts, whom to kill and whom to spare; He resigned his sacred person to the most barbarous indignities, submitted his beneficent hands to the pondrous hammer, and the piercing nail, yea, withheld not his heart, his very heart, from the stab of the executioner's spear; and, instead of flashing confusion on his outrageous tormentors, instead of plunging them to the depths of hell with his frown, he cried—in his last moments, and with his agonizing lips, he cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"—O! what a pattern of patience for his saints! what an object of admiration for angels! what a constellation of every mild, amiable, and benign virtue; shining in this hour of darkness, with ineffable splendour and beauty!—Hence, hence it is, that we are not trembling under the lightnings of Mount *Sinai;* that we are not blasted by the flames of divine vengeance; or doomed to dwell with everlasting burnings.

Ye frowning *wintry clouds;* oceans pendent in

the air, and burdening the winds: He, in whose hand you are an overflowing scourge, or by whose appointment an arsenal of warlike stores: He, who opens your sluices, and a flood gushes forth, to destroy the fruits of the earth, and drown the husbandman's hopes; who moulds you into frozen balls, and you are shot, linked with death, on the troops of his enemies: He, instead of discharging the furiousness of his wrath upon this guilty head, poured out his prayers, poured out his sighs, poured out his very soul, for me and my fellow transgressors; that by virtue of his inestimable propitiation, the overflowings of divine good-will might be extended to sinful men; that the skies might pour down righteousness; and peace, on her downy wings, peace, with her balmy blessings, descend to dwell on earth.

Ye *vernal clouds*, furls of finer air, folds of softer moisture: He who draws you in copious exhalations from the briny deep, bids you leave every distasteful quality behind, and become floating fountains of sweetest waters; He, who dissolves you into gentle rain, and dismisses you in fruitful showers; who kindly commissions you to drop down fatness as you fall, and to scatter flowers over the field; He, in the unutterable bitterness of his spirit, was without any comforting sense of his Almighty Father's presence; He, when his bones were burnt up like a firebrand, had not one drop of that sacred consolation, which, on many of his afflicted servants, has been distilled as the evening dews, and has "given songs in the night" of distress; that, from this unallayed and inconsolable anguish of our all-gracious Master, we, as from a well of salvation, might derive large draughts of spiritual refreshment.

Thou grand *ethereal bow*, whose beauties flush

the firmament, and charm every spectator: He who paints thee on the fluid skirts of the sky, who decks thee with all the pride of colours, and bends thee into that graceful and majestic figure; at whose command thy vivid streaks sweetly rise, or swiftly fade; He, through all his life, was arrayed in the humble garb of poverty, and at his exit wore the gorgeous garment of contempt; insomuch that even his own familiar friends, ashamed or afraid to own him, "hid as it were their faces from him;" to teach us a becoming disdain for the unsubstantial and transitory glitter of all worldly vanities; to introduce us, in robes brighter than the tinges of thy resplendent arch, even in the robes of his own immaculate righteousness, to introduce us before that august and venerable throne, which the peaceful rainbow surrounds, surrounds as a pledge of inviolable fidelity and infinite mercy.

Ye storms and *tempests*, which vex the continent, and toss the seas; which dash navies on the rocks, and drive forests from their roots: He, whose breath rouses you into such resistless fury, and whose nod controls you in your wildest career; He, who holds the rapid and raging hurricane in straitened reins, and walks, dreadfully serene, on the very wings of the wind; He went, all meek and gentle, like a lamb to the slaughter for us; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Thus are we instructed to bear, with decent magnanimity, the various assaults of adversity; and to pass, with a becoming tranquility of temper, through all the rude blasts of injurious treatment. Thus are we delivered from the unutterably fiercer storms of incensed and inexorable justice, from the "fire, the brimstone, and the horrible tempest, which will be the final portion of the ungodly."

Thou *pestilence*, that scatterest ten thousand poisons from thy baleful wings, tainting the air, and infecting the nations; under whose malignant influence, joy is blasted, and nature sickens; mighty regions are depopulated, and once crowded cities are left without inhabitants: He, who arms thee with inevitable destruction, and bids thee march before his angry countenance, to spread desolation among the tents of the wicked, and be the forerunner of far more fearful indignation; He, in his holy humanity, was arraigned as a criminal; and, though innocence itself, yea, the very pattern of perfection, was condemned to die like the most execrable miscreant. As a nuisance to society and the very bane of the public happiness, he was hurried away to execution, and hammered to the gibbet; that by his blood, he might prepare a sovereign medicine, to cure us of a more fatal distemper than the pestilence which walketh in darkness, or the sickness which destroyeth at noon-day; that he might himself say to our last enemy, "O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction."

Heat, whose burning influence parches the *Libyan* wilds, tans into soot the *Ethiopian's* complexion, and makes every species of life, pant, and droop, and languish: *Cold*, whose icy breath glazes yearly the *Russian* seas, often glues the frozen sailor to the cordage, and stiffens the traveller into a statue of rigid flesh: He, who sometimes blends you both, and produces the most agreeable temperature; sometimes suffers you to act separately, and rage with intolerable severity; that King of Heaven, and Controller of universal Nature, when dwelling in a tabernacle of clay, was exposed to chilling damps, and smitten by sultry beams. The stars, in their midnight watches, heard him pray; and the sun, in

his meridian fervours, saw him toil. Hence are our frozen hearts dissolved into a mingled flow of wonder, love, and joy; being conscious of a deliverance from those insufferable flames, which, kindled by divine indignation, burn to the lowest hell.

Thou *ocean*, vast world of waters! He, who sunk that capacious bed for thy reception, and, poured the liquid element into unfathomable channels; before whom all thy foaming billows and floating mountains are as the small drop of a bucket; who, by the least intimation of his will, swells thy fluid kingdoms, in wild confusion, to mingle with the clouds; or reduces them in calm composure to slumber on the shores: He, who once gave thee a warrant to overwhelm the whole earth, and bury all its degenerate inhabitants in a watery grave; but has now laid an everlasting embargo on thy boisterous waves, and bound thee, all fierce and madding as thou art, in chains stronger than adamant, yet formed of despicable sand: all the waves of vengeance and wrath, of tribulation and anguish, passed over his crucified body, and his agonizing soul; that we might emerge from those depths of misery, from that abyss of guilt, into which we were plunged by *Adam's* fall, and more irretrievably sunk by our own transgressions; that, at the last, we might be restored to that happy world, which is represented in the vision of God, as having "no sea;" to denote its perpetual stability and undisturbed serenity.

Ye *mountains*, that overlook the clouds, and project a shade into distant provinces; everlasting pyramids of nature, not to be shaken by conflicting elements, not to be shattered by the bolts of thunder, nor impaired even by the ravages of time: He who bid your ridges rise so high, and your founda-

tions stand so fast; He, in whose scale you are lighter than dust; in whose eye you are less than nothing; He sunk beneath a load of woes; woes insupportable, but not his own; when he took our iniquities upon himself, and heaved the more than mountainous burden from a guilty world.

Ye verdant *woods*, that crown our hills, and are crowned yourselves with leafy honours; ye humble *shrubs*, adorned in spring with opening blossoms, and fanned in summer by gentle gales; ye, that in distant climes or in cultivated gardens, breathe out spicy odours, and embalm the air with delightful perfumes: your all-glorious and ever-blessed Creator's head, was encircled with the thorny wreath; his face was defiled with contumelious spitting, and his body bathed in a bloody sweat: that we might wear the crown, the crown of glory, which fadeth not away; and live for evermore, surrounded with delights, as much surpassing yours, as yours exceed the rugged desolations of winter.

Thou mantling *vine;* He who hangs on thy slender shoots, the rich, transparent, weighty cluster: who, under thy unornamented foliage, and amidst the pores of thy otherwise worthless bough, prepares the liquor—the refined and exalted liquor, which cheers the nations, and fills the cup of joy: *Trees*, whose branches are elevated and waving in air, or diffused in easy confinement along a sunny wall: He, who bends you with a lovely burden of delicious fruits, whose genial warmth beautifies their rind and mellows their taste: He, when voluntarily subject to our wants, instead of being refreshed with your generous juices, or regaled with your luscious pulp, had a loathsome potion of vinegar, mingled with gall, addressed to his lips; that we might sit under the shadow of his merits with

great tranquility and the utmost complacency; that, ere long, being admitted into the paradise of God, we might eat of the tree of life, and drink new wine with him in his Father's kingdom.

Ye luxuriant *meadows;* He, who, without the seedsman's industry, replenishes your irriguous lap with never-failing crops of herbage, and enamels their cheerful green with flowers of every hue: Ye fertile *fields;* He, who blesses the labours of the husbandman, enriches your well-tilled plains with waving harvests, and calls forth the staff of life from your furrows; He, who causes both meadows and fields to laugh and sing for the abundance of plenty; He was no stranger to corroding hunger and parching thirst; He, alas! ate the bitter bread of wo and had "plenteousness of tears to drink," that we might partake of richer dainties than those which are produced by the dew of heaven, and proceed from the fatness of the earth; that we might feed on "the hidden manna," and eat the bread which giveth life, eternal life, unto the world.

Ye *mines*, rich in yellow ore, or bright with veins of silver; that distribute your shining treasures as far as winds can waft the vessel of commerce; that bestow your alms on monarchs, and have princes for your pensioners: Ye beds of *gems*, toy-shops of nature! which form, in dark retirement, the glittering stone; *diamonds*, that sparkle with a brilliant water; *rubies*, that glow with a crimson flame; *emeralds*, dipped in the freshest verdure of spring; *sapphires*, decked with the fairest drapery of the sky; *topaz*, emblazed with the golden gleam; *amethyst*, empurpled with the blushes of the morning: He who tinctures the metallic dust, and consolidates the lucid drop; He, when sojourning on earth, had no riches but the riches of disinterested benevo-

lence; had no ornament, but the ornament of unspotted purity. Poor he was in his circumstances, and mean in all his accommodations; that we might be rich in grace, and "obtain salvation with eternal glory; that we might inhabit the New *Jerusalem*, that splendid city, whose streets are paved with gold; whose gates are formed of pearl; and the walls garnished with all manner of precious stones.

Ye gushing *fountains*, that trickle potable silver through the matted grass: Ye fine transparent *streams*, that glide in crystal waves along your fringed banks: Ye deep and stately rivers, that wind and wander in your course, to spread your favours wider; that gladden kingdoms in your progress, and augment the sea with your tribute: He who supplies all your currents from his own ever-flowing and inexhaustible liberality; He, when his nerves were racked with exquisite pain, and his blood inflamed with a raging fever, cried, *I thirst*, and was denied (unparalleled hardship!) in this his great extremity, was denied the poor refreshment of a single drop of water; that we, having all-sufficiency in all things, might abound to every good work; might be filled with the fulness of spiritual blessings here, and hereafter be satisfied with that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore.

Ye *birds*, cheerful tenants of the bough, daily dressed in glossy plumage; who wake the morn, and solace the groves with your artless lays: inimitable architects! who, without rule or line, build your pensile structures with all the nicety of proportion; you have each his commodious nest; roofed with shades and lined with warmth to protect and cherish the callow brood; but He, who

tuned your throats to harmony, and taught you that curious skill; He was a man of sorrows, and had not where to lay his head; had not where to lay his head, till he felt the pangs of dissolution, and was laid in the silent grave; that we, dwelling under the wings of omnipotence, and resting in the bosom of infinite love, might spend an harmonious eternity in "singing the song of *Moses* and of the Lamb."

Bees, industrious workmen! that sweep, with busy wing, the flowery garden; and search the blooming heath; and sip the melifluous dews: strangers to idleness! that ply, with incessant assiduity, your pleasing task, and suffer no opening blossom to pass unexplored, no sunny gleam to slip away unimproved: most ingenious artificers! that cling to the fragrant buds, drain them of their treasured sweets, and extract (if I may so speak) even the odoriferous souls of herbs, and plants, and flowers; you, when you have completed your work; have collected, refined, and securely lodged the ambrosial stores; when you might reasonably expect the peaceful fruition of your acquisitions; you, alas! are barbarously destroyed, and leave your hoarded delicacies to others; leave them to be enjoyed by your very murderers. I cannot but pity your hard destiny! How then should my bowels melt with sympathy, and my eyes flow with tears, when I remember, that *thus*, *thus* it fared with your and our Incarnate Maker! After a life of the most exemplary and exalted piety; a life, filled with offices of beneficence and labours of love; he was by wicked hands, crucified and slain. He left the honey of his toil, the balm of his blood, and the riches of his obedience, to be shared among others; to be shared even among those, who too often crucify him afresh, and put him to open shame.

Shall I mention the animal, which *spins* her soft,

her shining, her exquisitely fine *silken* thread; whose matchless manufactures lend an ornament to grandeur, and make royalty itself more magnificent? Shall I take notice of the cell, in which, when the gayety and business of life are over, the little recluse immures herself and spends the remainder of her days in retirement? Shall I rather observe the sepulchre, which, when cloyed with pleasure and weary of the world, she prepares for her own interment? or how, when a stated period is elapsed, she wakes from a death-like inactivity, breaks the inclosure of her tomb, throws off the dusky shroud, assumes a new form, puts on a more sumptuous array, and, from an insect creeping on the ground, becomes a winged inhabitant of the air? No: this is a poor *reptile;* and therefore unworthy to serve as an illustration, when any character of the Son of God comes under consideration. But let me correct myself. Was not Christ (to use the language of his own blessed Spirit) *a worm, and no man?* in appearance such, and treated as such? Did he not also bequeath the fine linen of his own most perfect righteousness to compose the marriage-garment for our disarrayed and defiled souls? Did he not, before his flesh saw corruption, emerge triumphant from the grave; and not only mount the lower firmament, but ascend the heaven of heavens, take possession of those sublime abodes, in our name, and as our forerunner.

Ye *cattle*, that rest in your inclosed pastures; ye *beasts*, that range the unlimited forest; ye *fish* that rove through trackless paths of the sea; *sheep* clad in garments, which, when left by you, are wore by kings; *kine*, who feed on verdure, which, transmuted in your bodies, and strained from your udders, furnishes a repast for queens; *lions*, roaring after your prey; *leviathan*, taking your pastime

in the great deep; with all that wing the firmament, or tread the soil, or swim the waves: He who spreads his ever hospitable board, who admits you all to be his continual guests, and suffers you to want no manner of thing that is good; He was destitute, afflicted, tormented; He endured all that was miserable and reproachful, in order to exalt a degenerate race, who had debased themselves to a level with the beasts that perish, unto seats of distinguished and immortal honour, in order to introduce the slaves of sin and heirs of hell into mansions of consumate and everlasting bliss.

Surely, the contemplation of such a subject, and the distant anticipation of such a hope, may almost turn earth into heaven, and make even inanimate nature vocal with praise. Let it then break forth from every creature. Let the *meanest* feel the inspiring impulse: let the *greatest* acknowledge themselves unable worthily to express the stupendous goodness.

Praise Him, ye *insects* that crawl on the ground; who, though high above all height, humbled himself to dwell in dust. *Birds* of the air, waft on your wings, and warble in your notes, his praise, who, though Lord of the celestial abodes, while sojourning on earth, wanted a shelter commodious as your nests. Ye rougher world of *brutes*, join with the gentle songsters of the shade, and howl to Him your hoarse applause, who breaks the jaw-bones of the infernal lion, who softens into mildness the savage disposition, and bids the wolf lie down, in amicable agreement, with the lamb. *Bleat* out, ye hills; let broader *lows* be responsive from the vales; ye forests catch, and ye rocks retain, the inarticulate hymn; because Messiah the Prince *feeds his flocks like a shepherd; he gathereth the lambs with his arm; he carries them in his bosom, and*

gently leads those that are with young. Wave, ye stately *cedars*, in sign of worship, wave your branching heads to Him, who meekly bowed his own on the accursed tree. Pleasing *prospects*, scenes of beauty, where nicest art conspires with lavish nature to form a paradise below, lay forth all your charms, and in all your charms confess yourselves a mere blank, compared with his amiableness, who is "fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." Drop down, ye *showers*; and testify, as you fall; testify of his grace, which descends more copiously than the rain, distils more sweetly than the dew. Let sighing *gales* breathe, and murmuring *rivulets* flow; breathe and flow in harmonious consonance to Him, whose Spirit is far more reviving than the cooling breeze, who is himself the Fountain of living Waters.

Ye *lightnings*, blaze to his honour; ye *thunders*, sound his praise; while reverberating *clouds* return the roar, and bellowing *oceans* propagate the tremendous anthem. *Mutest* of creatures, add your silent oratory, and display the triumphs of his meekness; who, though he maketh the clouds his chariot, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; though the thunder is his voice, and the lightning his sword of justice; yet, amidst the most abusive and cruel injuries, was submissive and lifted not his hand, was "dumb and opened not his mouth." Great *source* of *day*, address thy radiant homage to a far sublimer sun. Write, in all thy ample round, with every lucid beam, O! write a testimony to Him, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, who is the Sun of Righteousness to a sinful world; and is risen, never to go down; is risen, to be our everlasting light. Shine clear, ye skies; look gay, thou *earth;* let the *floods* clap their hands, and let *every* creature wear a smile; for he cometh, the Creator himself cometh,

to be manifested in the flesh; and with him comes pardon, peace, and joy; every virtue and all felicity comes in his train. *Angels* and *archangels*, let your songs be of Jesus, and teach the very heavens to echo with his adored and majestic name. Ye beheld him, with greater transports and admiration, when you attended his agony in the garden, and saw him prostrate on the ground; that when you beheld universal nature rising at his call, and saw the wonders of his creating might. Tune to loftiest notes your golden harps, and waken raptures, unknown before even in heavenly breasts; while all that has *breath* swells the concert of harmony, and all that has *being* unites in the tribute of praise.

Chiefly let *man*, exalt his voice; let man, with distinguished hosannas, hail the Redeemer. For man, he was stretched on the racking cross; for man, he was consigned to the gloomy sepulchre; for man, he procured grace unmeasurable, and bliss inconceivable. However *different* therefore, in your age, or more different in your circumstances, be *unanimous*, O men, in magnifying a Saviour, who is no respecter of persons; who gave himself a ransom for all. Bend, ye *kings*, from your thrones of ivory and gold; in your robes of imperial purple, fall prostrate at His feet; who forsook a nobler throne, and laid aside more illustrious ensigns of majesty, that you might reign with God for ever and ever. *Children* of *poverty*, meanest of mortals (if any can be called poor, who are *thus* enriched; if any can be accounted poor, who are thus ennobled;) rejoice, greatly rejoice, in God your Saviour, who chose to be indigent, was willing to be contemned, that you might be entitled to the treasures, and be numbered with the princes of heaven. *Sons of affliction*, though harrassed with pain, and inured to anguish, O! change your groans into songs of

gratitude; let no complaining voice, no jarring string be heard in the universal symphony; but *glorify* the Lamb even *in the fires*, who himself bore greater torment than you feel, and has promised you a share in the joy which he inherits; who has made your sufferings short, and will make your rest eternal. *Men of hoary locks*, bending beneath a weight of years, and tottering on the brink of the grave; let Christ be your support under all infirmities; lean upon Christ, as the rock of your salvation. Let his name, his precious name, form the last accents which quiver on your pale expiring lips. And let this be the first that lisps on your tongues, ye tender *infants;* remember your Redeemer in your earliest moments; devote the choicest of your hours to the learning of his will, and the chief of your strength to the glorifying of his name; who, in the perfection of health, and the very prime of manhood, was content to become a motionless and ghastly corpse; that you might be girt up with the vigour, and clothed with the bloom of eternal youth.

Ye *spirits* of *just men made perfect*, who are released from the burden of the flesh, and freed from all the vexatious solicitations of corruption in yourselves; delivered from all the injurious effects of iniquity in others; who sojourn no longer in the tents of strife, or the territories of disorder; but are received into that pure, harmonious, holy society, where every one acts up to his amiable and exalted character; where God himself is pleased *graciously* and *immediately* to preside: you find, not without pleasing astonishment, your hopes improved into actual enjoyment, and your faith superceded by the beatific vision. You feel all your former shyness of behaviour happily lost in the overflowings of unbounded love, and all your little differences of opinion en-

tirely bore down by tides of invariable truth. Bless, therefore, with all your enlarged powers, bless *his* infinitely larger goodness; who when he had overcome the sharpness of death, opened the gates of paradise, opened the kingdom of heaven, to all generations, and to every denomination of the faithful.

Ye men of *holy* conversation and *humble* tempers, think of Him who *loved you*, and *washed you from your sins in his own blood;* think of him on your silent couch; talk of him in every social interview; glory in his excellencies; make your boast of his obedience, and add, still continue to add, the incense of a dutiful life, to all the oblations of a grateful tongue. *Weakest* of *believers*, who go mourning under a sense of guilt, and conflicting with the ceaseless assaults of temptation; put off your sackcloth, and be girded with gladness; because Jesus is as merciful to hear, as he is mighty to help; because he is touched with the tenderest sympathizing concern for all your distresses; and he lives, ever lives, to be your *advocate* with the Father. Why then should uneasy doubts sadden your countenance? Why should desponding fears oppress your souls? Turn, turn those disconsolate sighs into cheerful hymns, since you have his *powerful intercession*, and his *inestimable merits*, to be your anchor in all tribulations, to be your passport into eternal blessedness.

Most of all, ye *ministers* of the *sanctuary;* heralds commissioned from above; lift, every one, his voice like a trumpet, and loudly proclaim the Redeemer. Get ye up, ye ambassadors of peace, get ye up into the high mountains, and spread far and wide the honours of the lamb, "that was slain, but is alive for evermore." Teach every sacred roof to resound with his fame, and every human heart to glow

with his love. Declare, as far as the force of words will go, declare the inexhaustible fulness of that great atonement, whose merits are commensurate with the glories of the Divinity. Tell the sinful wretch that pity yearns in Immanuel's bowels; what blood he has spilt, what agonies he has endured, what wonders he has wrought for the salvation of his enemies. Invite the indigent to become rich; entreat the guilty to accept of pardon; because with the crucified Jesus is plenteous redemption, and all-sufficiency to save. While you, placed in conspicuous stations, pour the joyful sound; may I, as I steal through the vale of humble life, catch the pleasing accents! For *me*, the Author of all blessings became a curse; for *me*, his bones were dislocated, and his flesh was torn: he hung with streaming veins, and an agonizing soul on the cross for *me*. O! may I, in my little sphere, and amidst the scanty circle of my acquaintance, at least whisper these glad transporting tidings; whisper them from my own heart, that they may surely reach, and sweetly penetrate theirs.

But when men and angels raise the grand hymn; when all worlds, and all beings, add their *collective* acclamations, this full, fervent, and universal chorus will be so *inferior* to the riches of the redeemer's grace, so *disproportionate* to the magnificence of his glory, that it will seem but to *debase* the unutterable subject it attempts to exalt. The loud hallelujah will *die away* in the solemn mental eloquence of prostrate, rapturous, *silent* adoration:

> O goodness infinite! goodness immense!
> And *love that passeth knowledge!* Words are vain;
> Language is lost in wonders so divine,
> "Come then, expressive *silence*, muse his praise."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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MEDITATIONS

AND

CONTEMPLATIONS,

BY THE

REVEREND JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

LATE RECTOR OF WESTON-FAVELL,

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE:

CONTAINING HIS

MEDITATIONS AMONG THE TOMBS,

REFLECTIONS ON A FLOWER-GARDEN,

&c. &c. &c.

TOGETHER WITH

THE LIFE OF THE AUTHOR

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CONTEMPLATIONS

ON

THE NIGHT.

Night is fair *Virtue*'s immemorial friend:
The conscious *moon* through ev'ry distant age,
Has held a lamp to *Wisdom*.

NIGHT THOUGHTS, No. V.

PREFACE.

We have already exercised our speculations on the Tombs and Flowers, surveying nature covered with the deepest horrors, and arrayed in the richest beauties. Allegory taught many of the objects to speak the language of virtue; while *Imagination* lent her colouring, to give the lessons an engaging air; and this with a view of imitating that *divine* Instructor, who commissioned the *lily*, in her silver suit, to remonstrate in the ear of unbelieving reason; who sent his disciples (men ordained to *teach* the universe) to *learn* maxims of the last importance from the most *insignificant* birds, that wander through the paths of the air, from the very meanest Herbs that are scattered over the face of the ground.

Emboldened by the kind acceptance of the preceding sketches, I beg leave to confide in the same *benevolence* of *taste*, for the protection and support of the two remaining Essays, which exhibit a prospect of a *still life* and *grand operation;* which moralize on the most composed and most magnificent appearances of things; in which *fancy* is again suffered to introduce her imagery, but only as the handmaid of *truth;* in order to dress her person and display her charms, to engage the at-

tention and win the love even of the *gay* and of the *fashionable;* which is more likely to be effected by forming agreeable pictures of nature, and deriving instructive observations, than by the laborious method of long-deduced arguments or close-connected reasonings. The contemplation of the *heavens* and the *earth*, of their admirable properties and beneficial changes, has always afforded the most exalted gratification to the human mind. In compliance with this prevailing taste, I have drawn my serious admonitions from the stupendous theatre and variegated scenery of the universe; that the reader may learn his duty from his very pleasures, may gather *wisdom*, mingled with *virtue* from most refined *entertainments* and noblest *delights*.

The *evening*, drawing her sables over the world, and gently darkening into *night*, is a season peculiarly proper for sedate consideration. All circumstances concur to hush our passions, and sooth our cares; to tempt our steps abroad, and prompt our thoughts to serious reflection.

> ——Then is the time
> For those, whom wisdom and whom nature charms,
> To steal themselves from the degenerate crowd,
> And soar above this little scene of things;
> To tread low-thoughted vice beneath their feet;
> To sooth the throbbing passions into peace;
> And woo lone quiet in her silent walks.

The favour I would solicit for the *first* of the following compositions, is, that it may be permitted to attend in such retired and contemplative excursions; to attend, if not under the character of a friend, at least in the humble capacity of a servant or a page—as a *servant*, to open the door of meditation, and remove every impediment to those best

exercises of the mind, which blend advantage with amusement, and improve while they delight; as a *page*, to gather up the unstable, fluctuating train of fancy, and collect her fickle powers into a consistent, regular, and useful habit of thinking.

The *other*, conversant among the *starry regions*, would lead the imagination through those beautiful tracts of unclouded azure, and point out to the judgment some of those astonishing particulars which so eminently signalize the celestial worlds: a prospect this, to which curiosity attracts our eyes, and to which Scripture itself often directs our study; a prospect beyond all others most excellently calculated to *enlarge* the soul, and *ennoble* its conceptions, to give the grandest apprehensions of the *everlasting* God, and create sentiments of becoming superiority with relation to all *transitory* interests; in a word to furnish *faith* with the surest foundation for a steady affiance and true magnanimity of spirit, to afford *piety* the strongest motives, both for a lively gratitude and profound veneration.

While *Galileo* lifts his tube, and discovers the prodigious magnitude of those radiant orbs; while *Newton* measures their amazing distances, and unites the whole system in harmonious order, by the subtle influences of attraction; I would only, like the herald before that illustrious *Hebrew*, proclaim at every turn, "*Bow the knee*, and adore the Almighty Maker; magnify his eternal name, *and make his praise*, like all his works, *to be glorious.*"

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON

THE NIGHT.

THE business of the day despatched, and the sultry heats abated, invited me to the recreation of a walk; a walk in one of the *finest recesses* of the country, and in one of the most *pleasant evenings* which the summer season produced.

The limes and elms, uniting their branches over my head, formed a *verdant canopy*, and cast a most refreshing shade. Under my feet lay a *carpet* of nature's *velvet*, grass intermingled with moss and embroidered with flowers. Jessamines, in conjunction with woodbines, twined around the trees, displaying their *artless beauties* to the eye, and diffusing their *delicious sweets* through the air. On either side, the boughs, rounded into a set of regular arches, opened a view into the *distant fields*, and presented me with a prospect of the *bending skies*. The little birds, all joyous and grateful for the favours of the light, were paying their acknowledgments in a *tribute* of *harmony*, and soothing themselves to rest with songs; while a French horn, from a neighbouring seat, sent its melodious accents, softened by the length of their passage, to complete the *concert* of the *grove*.

Roving in this agreeable manner, my thoughts were exercised on a subject still more agreeable than the season or the scene: I mean our late *signal victory* over the united forces of intestine treason and

foreign invasion; a victory which pours joy through the present age, and will transmit its influence to generations yet unborn.—Are not all the blessings, which can endear society, or render life itself desirable, centered in our present happy constitution and auspicious government? Were they not *all* struck at by that impious and horrid blow, meditated at *Rome*, levelled by *France*, and seconded by factious spirits at *home?* Who then can be sufficiently thankful for the gracious interposition of Providence, which has not only averted the impending ruin, but turned it, with aggravated confusion, on the authors of our troubles?

Methinks, every thing *valuable* which I possess, every thing *charming* which I behold, conspire to enhance this ever-memorable event. To this it is owing that I can ramble unmolested along the vale of private life, and taste all the innocent satisfactions of a *contemplative* retirement. Had rebellion succeeded in her detestable designs, instead of walking with security and complacence in these flowery paths, I might have met the *assassin* with his *dagger*, or have been obliged to abandon my habitation, and "embrace the rock for a shelter." Farewell, then, ye fragrant shades, seats of meditation and calm repose! I should have been driven from your loved retreats, to make way for some barbarous, some *insulting victor*. Farewell, then, ye pleasing toils, and wholesome amusements of my rural hours; I should no more have reared the tender flower to the sun; no more have taught the espalier to expand her boughs; nor have fetched any longer from my kitchen-garden, the purest supplies of health.

Had rebellion succeeded in her detestable designs, instead of being regaled with the *music* of the

woods, I might have been alarmed with the sound of the trumpet and all the thunder of war; instead of being entertained with this *beautiful landscape*, I might have beheld our houses ransacked, and our villages plundered; I might have beheld our fenced cities encompassed with armies, and our fruitful fields "clothed with desolation;" or have been shocked with more frightful images of "garments rolled in blood," and of a ruffian's blade reeking from a brother's heart: instead of peace, with her cheering olives, sheltering our abodes; instead of justice, with her impartial scale, securing our goods; *persecution* had brandished her sword, and *slavery* clanked her chains.

Nor are these miseries imaginary only, or the creatures of a groundless panic. There are, in a neighbouring kingdom, who very lately experienced them in all their rigour. And if the *malignant* spirit of *popery* had forced itself into our church; if an *abjured pretender* had cut his way to our throne; we could have no reason to expect a mitigation of their severity on our behalf. But supposing the tender mercies of a bigoted usurper to have been somewhat less cruel, where, alas! would have been the encouragement to cultivate our little portion; or what pleasure could arise from an improved spot, if both the one and the other lay every moment at the mercy of *lawless* power? This embittering circumstance would spoil their relish; and by rendering them a *precarious*, would render them a *joyless* acquisition. In vain might the vine spread her purple clusters, in vain be lavish of her generous juices, if *tyranny*, like a ravenous harpy, should be always hovering over the bowl, and ready to snatch it from the lip of industry, or to wrest it from the hand of liberty.

Liberty, that dearest of names, and *property*, that best of charters, give an additional, an inexpressible charm to every delightful object. See, how the declining sun has beautified the *western clouds*, has arrayed them in crimson, and skirted them with gold; such a refinement of our domestic bliss is property; such an improvement of our public privileges is liberty. When the lamp of day shall withdraw his beams, there will still remain the same collection of floating vapours; but Oh! how changed, how gloomy! The carnation-streaks are faded, the golden edgings are worn away, and all the lovely tinges are lost in a *leaden-coloured lowering* sadness. Such would be the aspect of all these scenes of beauty, and all these abodes of pleasure, if exposed continually to the caprice of arbitrary sway, or held in a state of abject and cringing dependence.

The sun has almost finished his daily race, and hastens to the goal. He descends lower and lower, till his chariot-wheels seem to hover on the utmost verge of the sky. What is somewhat remarkable, the orb of light, upon the point of setting, grows considerably *broader*. The shadows of objects, just before they become blended in undistinguishable darkness, are exceedingly *lengthened;* like blessings, little prized while *possessed*, but highly esteemed the very instant they are preparing for their flight; bitterly regretted, when once they are gone, and to be seen no more.

The radiant globe is now half immersed beneath the dusky earth; or, as the ancient poets speak, is shooting into the ocean, and sinks in the western sea. And could I view the *sea* at this juncture, it would yield a most amusing and curious spectacle. The rays, striking horizontally on the liquid ele-

ment, give it the appearance of floating glass; or, reflected in many a different direction, form a beautiful multiplicity of colours. A stranger, as he walks along the sandy beach, and, lost in pensive attention, listens to the murmurings of the restless flood, is agreeably alarmed by the *gay decorations* of the surface. With entertainment and with wonder, he sees the curling waves, here glistening with white, there glowing with purple; in one place wearing an azure tincture, in another glancing a cast of undulating green; in the whole exhibiting a piece of *fluid scenery* that may vie with yonder pencil tapestries, though wrought in the loom, and tinged with the dyes of heaven.

While I am transported by fancy to the shores of the ocean, the great luminary is sunk beneath the horizon, and totally disappears. The whole face of the ground is overspread with shades, or, with what one of the finest painters of nature calls a *dun obscurity*. Only a few very superior eminences are tipped with streaming silver. The tops of groves and lofty towers catch the *last smiles* of the day, are still irradiated by the departing beams: but, O! how transient is the distinction! how momentary the gift! Like all the blessings which mortals enjoy below, it is *gone* almost as soon as *granted*. See! how languishingly it trembles on the leafy spire, and glimmers with a dying faintness on the mountain's brow. The little vivacity that remains, decays every moment. It can no longer hold its station. While I speak, it expires, and resigns the world to the gradual approaches of night.

——Now *twilight* gray
Has in her sober livery all things clad.

Every object, a little while ago, glared with light, but now all appears under a more qualified lustre. The animals harmonize with the insensible creation; and what was *gay* in those, as well as *glittering* in this, gives place to an universal *gravity*. In the meadows all was jocund and sportive; but now the gamesome lambs are grown weary of their frolics, and the tired shepherd has improved silence on his pipe. In the branches all was sprightliness and song; but now the lively green is wrapped in the descending glooms, and no tuneful airs are heard, only the plaintive stock-dove cooing mournfully through the grove. Should I now be vain and trifling, the heavens and the earth would rebuke my unseasonable levity! Therefore be these moments devoted to thoughts *sedate* as the closing day, *solemn* as the face of things. And, indeed, however my social hours are enlivened with innocent pleasantry, let every evening, in her sable habit, toll the bell to serious consideration. Nothing can be more porper for a person who walks on the borders of eternity, and is hasting continually to his final audit; nothing more proper than daily to slip away from the circle of amusements, and frequently to relinquish the hurry of business, in order to consider and adjust "the things that belong to his peace."

Since the sun is departed, from whence can it proceed that I am not involved in pitchy darkness? Whence these remainders of *diminished brightness*, which, though scarcely forming a refulgence, soften and sooth the horrors of night? I see not the shining ruler, yet am cheered with a real though faint communication of his splendour. Does he remember us, in his progress through other climes? Does he send a *detachment* of his rays to *escort* us during

his personal absence; or to *cover* (if I may use the military term) our *retreat* from the scene of action? Has he bequeathed us a dividend of his beams, sufficient to render our circumstances easy, and our situation agreeable, till sleep pours its soft oppression on the organs of sense, till sleep suspends all the operations of our hands, and entirely supercedes any farther occasion for the light?

No: it is ill-judged and unreasonable to ascribe this benificent conduct to the sun. Not unto him, not unto him, but unto his *Almighty Maker* we are obliged for this pleasing attendant, this valuable legacy. The gracious Author of our being has so disposed the collection of circumambient air, as to make it productive of this fine and wonderful effect. The sunbeams, falling on the higher parts of the ærial fluid, instead of passing on in straight lines are bent inwards and conducted to our sight. Their natural course is over-ruled, and they are bidden to wheel about on purpose to favour us with a welcome and salutary visit: by which means, the blessing of light and the season of business are considerably prolonged; and, what is a very endearing circumstance, prolonged most considerably; when the vehement heats of summer incline the *student* to postpone his walk till the temperate evening prevails; when the important labours of the harvest call the *husbandman* abroad before the day is fully risen.

After all the ardours of the sultry day, how reviving is this *coolness!* This gives new verdure to the fading plants, new vivacity to the withering flowers, and a more exquisite fragrance to their mingled scents: by this, the air also receives a new force; and is qualified to exert itself with greater activity—qualified to brace our limbs, to heave our lungs, and to co-operate with a brisker impulse in perpe-

tuating the circulation of our blood. This I might call the grand *alembic* of nature, which distils her most sovereign *cordial*, the refreshing *dews*. Incessant heat would rob us of their beneficial agency, and oblige them to evaporate in imperceptible exhalations. Turbulent winds, or even the gentler motions of *Aurora's* fan, would dissipate the rising vapours, and not suffer them to form a coalition.—But, favoured by the stillness, and condensed by the coolness of the night, they unite in pearly drops, and create that *finely-tempered* humidity which cheers the vegetable world, as sleep exhilarates the animal.

Not unlike to these are the advantages of *solitude*. The world is a troubled ocean, and who can erect stable purposes on its fluctuating waves ? The world is a school of wrong; and who does not feel himself warping to its pernicious influences ? On this sea of glass, how insensibly we slide from our own steadfastness ! Some sacred *truth*, which was struck in lively characters on our souls, is obscured, if not obliterated; some worthy *resolution*, which heaven had wrought in our breasts, is shaken, if not overthrown: some enticing *vanity*, which we had solemnly renounced, again practises its wiles, and again captivates our affections. How often has an unwary glance kindled a fever of irregular desire in our hearts ! How often has a word of applause dropped luscious poison into our ears; or some disrespectful expression raised a gust of passion in our bosoms ! Our innocence is of so *tender* a constitution, that it suffers in the promiscuous crowd. Our purity is of so *delicate* a complexion, that it scarce touches on the world without contracting a stain. We see, we hear, with peril.

But here *safety* dwells; every meddling and in-

trusive avocation is secluded; silence holds the door against the strife of tongues, and all the impertinences of idle conversation. The busy swarm of vain images and cajoling temptations, which beset us, with a buzzing importunity, amidst the gaieties of life, are chased by these thickening shades. Here I may, without disturbance, commune with my own heart; and learn that best of sciences, to *know myself.* Here the soul may rally her dissipated powers, and grace recover its native energy. This is the opportunity to rectify every evil impression; to expel the poison, and guard against the contagion of corrupting examples. This is the place, where I may with advantage apply myself to subdue the *rebel within;* and be master, not of a sceptre, but of myself. Throng then, ye ambitious, the levees of the powerful; I will be punctual in my assignations with solitude. To a mind intent upon its own improvement, solitude has charms incomparably more engaging than the *entertainments* presented in the theatre, or the *honours* conferred in the drawing-room.

I said, solitude.—Am I then *alone?*—'Tis true, my acquaintance are at a distance. I have stole away from company, and am remote from all *human* observation. But that is an alarming thought:

> Millions of *Spiritual* creatures walk the earth,
> *Unseen,* both when we wake, and when we sleep.

Perhaps, there may be numbers of those *invisible beings* patrolling this same retreat, and joining with me in contemplating the Creator's works; perhaps, those *ministering spirits,* who rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, and hold up the goings of the righteous, may follow us to the lonely recess: and

even in our most solitary moments be our constant *attendants.* What a pleasing awe is awakened by such a reflection! How venerable it renders my retired walks! I am struck with reverence, as under the roof of some *sacred edifice*, or in the *presence-chamber* of some mighty monarch. O! may I never bring any pride of imagination, nor indulge the least dissolute affection, where such refined and exalted intelligences exercise their watch!

'Tis possible, that I am encompassed with such a cloud of witnesses; but it is certain that God, the *infinite eternal* God, is now and ever with me. The great Jehovah, before whom all the angelic armies bow their heads and veil their faces, surrounds me, supports me, pervades me. "In him I live, move, and have my being." The whole world is his august temple: and in the most sequestered corner, I appear before his adorable Majesty, no less than when I worship in his house, or kneel at his altar. In every place, therefore, let me pay him the homage of a heart cleansed from idols, and devoted to his service. In every circumstance let me feel no *ambition*, but to please him; nor covet any *happiness*, but to *enjoy* him.

How sublime is the description, and how striking the sentiment, in that noble passage of the Psalms! *Whither shall I go from thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I climb up into the* heights of *heaven, thou art there* enthroned in light: *If I go down to the* depths of the *grave, thou art there also* in thy pavillion of darkness: *if I retire* to the remotest eastern climes, *where the morning first takes wing: if*, swifter than the darting ray, *I* pass to the opposite regions of the west, and *remain in the uttermost parts of the sea:* shall I, in *that* distant situation, be beyond thy reach; or, by *this* sud-

den transition, escape thy notice? So far from it, that could I, with one glance of thought, transport myself beyond all the bounds of creation, I should still be encircled with the immensity of thy essence; or rather, still be enclosed in the hollow of thy hand. Awful yet delightful truth! Let it be interwoven with every thought, and become one with the very consciousness of my existence! that I may continually *walk with* God, and conduct myself, in every step of my behaviour, *as seeing* him *that is invisible*."

They are the happy persons; felicity, true felicity, is *all their own*, who live under an habitual sense of God's omnipresence, and a sweet persuasion of his special love. If dangers threaten, their impregnable defence is at hand. Nothing can be so near to terrify, as their almighty Guardian to secure them. To these the hours can never be *tedious*, and it is impossible for them to be *alone*. Do they step aside from the occupations of animal life? A more exalted set of employments engage their attention. They address themselves, in all the various acts of devotion, to their heavenly Father *who* now *sees in secret, and will* hereafter *reward them openly:* they spread all their wants before his indulgent eye, and disburden all their sorrows into his compassionate bosom. Do they withdraw from human society? They find themselves under the more immediate regards of their Maker. If they resign the satisfactions of social intercourse, it is to cultivate a correspondence with the condescending Deity and taste the pleasures of divine friendship. What is such a *state* but the very suburbs of heaven? What is such a *conduct*, but an antepast of eternal blessedness?

Now, my soul, the day is *ended*. The hours

are all fled: they are fled to the supreme Judge, and have given in their evidence; an evidence registered in heaven, and to be produced at the great audit. Happy *they*, whose improvement has kept pace with the fleeting minutes; who have seized the important fugitives, and engaged them in the pursuit of *wisdom*, or devoted them to the service of *virtue*.

Fugitives indeed they are. Our moments slip away silently and insensibly: the thief steals not more unperceived from the pillaged house. And will the runagates never stop? No: wherever we are, however employed, time pursues his incessant course. Though we are listless and dilatory, the great measurer of our days presses on; still presses on in his unwearied career, and whirls our weeks, and months, and years away. Is it not then surprisingly strange, to hear people complain of the *tediousness* of their times, and how *heavy* it hangs upon their hands? to see them contrive a variety of amusing artifices to accelerate its flight, and get rid of its burden? Ah! thoughtless mortals! Why need you urge the headlong torrent? Your days are swifter than a *post*, which, carrying despatches of the last importance, with unremitted speed scours the road. They pass away like the nimble *ships*, which have the wind in their wings, and skim along the watery plain. They hasten to their destined period with the rapidity of an *eagle*, which leaves the stormy blast behind her, while she cleaves the air, and darts upon her prey.

Now the day is gone, how *short* it appears! When my fond eye beheld it in *perspective*, it seemed a very considerable space. Minutes crowded upon minutes, and hours ranged behind hours, exhibited an extensive draught, and flattered me with

a long progression of pleasures; but, upon a *retrospective* view, how wonderfully is the scene altered! The landscape, large and spacious, which a warm fancy drew, brought to the test of cool experience, shrinks into a span: just as the shores vanish, and mountains dwindle to a spot, when the sailor, surrounded by skies and ocean, throws his last look on his native land. How clearly do I now discover the cheat! May it never impose upon my unwary imagination again! I find, there is nothing abiding on this side eternity. A *long* duration, in a state of *finite* existence, is mere illusion.

Perhaps the *healthy* and the *gay* may not readily credit the serious truth; especially from a young pen, and new to its employ. Let us then refer ourselves to the decision of the *ancient*. Ask some venerable old person, who is just marching off the mortal stage, *How many have been the days of the years of thy life?* It was a monarch's question; and therefore can want no recommendation to the fashionable world. Observe how he shakes his hoary locks, and from a deep-felt conviction replies, "*Fourscore years* have finished their rounds, to furrow these cheeks, and clothe this head in snow. Such a term may seem long and large to inconsiderate youth. But O! how short, how scanty, to one that has made the experiment! *Short*, as a gleam of transient sunshine; *scanty*, as the shadow that departeth. Methinks it was but yesterday, that I exchanged my childish sports for manly exercises; and now I am resigning them both for the sleep of death. As soon as we are *born*, we begin to draw to our *end:* and how small is the interval between the cradle and the tomb!" O! may we believe this testimony of mature age! May every evening bring with it the clearer evidence to our

minds! And may we form such an estimate of the little pittance, while it is upon the advancing hand, as we shall certainly make, when the sands are all run down!

Let me add one reflection on the *work* to be *done*, while this shuttle is flying through the loom; a work of no small difficulty, yet of the utmost consequence? Hast thou not seen, hast thou not known, the excellent of the earth; who were living images of their Maker? His *divine likeness* was transfused into their hearts, and beamed forth in all their conduct: beamed forth in meekness of wisdom, and purity of affection; in all the tender offices of love, and all the nobler efforts of zeal. To be stamped with the same beautiful signature, and to be followers of them as they were of Christ; *this, this* is thy *business*. On the accomplishment of this, thy eternal All depends. And will an affair of such unspeakable weight admit of a moment's delay or consist with the least remissness? especially, since much of thy appointed time is already elapsed, and the remainder is *all uncertainty*, save only that it is in the very act to fly. Or suppose thou hadst made a covenant with the grave, and wast assured of reaching the age of *Methuselah;* how soon would even such a lease expire! Extend it, if you please, still farther; and let it be *co-existent* with nature itself. How inconsiderable is the addition! For yet a very little while, and the commissioned archangel lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by the Almighty name, *that time shall be no longer*. Then, *abused* opportunities will never return; and new opportunities will never more be offered. Then, should negligent mortals wish—wish ever so passionately—for a few hours—a few moments only—to be thrown back from the open-

ing eternity; *thousands* of worlds would not be able to procure the grant.

Shall I now be industrious to shorten what is no longer than a span; or to quicken the space of what is ever on the wing? Shall I squander away what is *unutterably important*, while it lasts: and, when once departed, is *altogether irrevocable?* O! my soul, forbear the folly, forbear the desperate extravagance. Wilt thou chide, as a loiterer, the arrow that boundeth from the string; or sweep away diamonds, as the refuse of thy house? Throw time away? Astonishing, ruinous, irreparable profuseness! Throw empires away, and be blameless. But O! be parsimonious of thy days; husband thy precious hours. They go connected, indissolubly connected, with heaven or hell. *Improved*, they are a sure pledge of everlasting glory; *wasted*, they are a sad preface to never-ending confusion and anguish.

What a *profound silence* has composed the world! So profound is the silence, that my very breath seems a noise; the ticking of my watch is distinctly heard; if I do but stir, it creates a disturbance. There is, now, none of that confused din from the tumultuous city; no voice of jovial rustics from the neighbouring meadow; nor chirping melody from the shady thicket. Every lip is sealed; not the least whisper invades the air, nor the least motion rustles among the boughs. *Echo* herself sleeps unmolested. The expanded ear, though all attention, catches no sound, but the liquid lapse of a distant murmuring stream.

All things are hush'd, as nature's self lay dead.

If, in the midst of this deep and universal compo-

sure, ten thousand bellowing thunders should burst over my head, and rend the skies with their united volleys; how should I bear so *unexpected a shock?* It would stun my senses, and confound my thoughts: I should shudder in every limb; perhaps, sink to the earth with terror. Consider, then, O mortals! consider the much more *prodigious* and *amazing* call, which will, ere long, alarm your sleeping bones. When the tenants of the tomb have slumbered, in the most undisturbed repose, for a multitude of ages; what an inconceivable consternation must the *shout* of the *archangel*, and the *trump* of God, occasion! Will it not wound the ear of the ungodly; and affright, even to distraction, the impenitent sinner? The stupenduous peal will sound through the vast of heaven; will shake the foundations of nature; and pierce even the deepest recesses of the grave. And how—O! how will the prisoners of divine justice be able to endure that tremendous *summons* to a far more tremendous tribunal! Do thou, my soul, listen to the *still voice* of the Gospel; attend, in this thy day, to the gracious invitations of thy Saviour. Then shall that great midnight cry close its *horror*, and be *music* in thy ears: it shall be welcome to thy reviving clay, as the tidings of liberty to the dungeon captive; as the year of jubilee to the harrassed slave. This, this shall be its charming import; *Awake, and sing, ye that dwell in dust.*

What a general *cessation* of *affairs* has this dusky hour introduced! A little while ago, all was hurry, hurry. Life and activity exerted themselves in a thousand busy forms. The city swarmed with passing and repassing multitudes; all the country was sweat and dust; the air floated in perpetual agitation, by the flitting birds, and humming

bees; *art* sat prying with her piercing eyes while *industry* plied her restless hands. But see, how all this fervent and impetuous bustle is fled with the setting sun. The beasts are slunk to their grassy couch, and the winged people are retired to their downy nest; the hammer has resigned its sounding task, and the file ceases to repeat its flying touches: shut is the well-frequented shop and its threshold no longer worn by the feet of numerous customers. The village swain lies drowned in slumbers; and even his trusty dog, who for a considerable time stood centry at the door, is extended at his ease, and snores with his master. In every place *toil* reclines her head, and *application* folds her arms. All interests seem to be forgot; all pursuits are suspended; all employment is sunk away; sunk away with those fluttering myriads, which lately sported in the sun's departing rays. 'Tis like the sabbath of universal nature; or, as though the pulse of life stood still.

Thus will it be with our infinitely momentous concerns when *once the shadows of the evening* (that long evening, which follows the footsteps of death!) *are stretched over us.* The dead cannot seek unto God; the living, the living alone, are possessed of this inestimable opportunity. "There is no work or device, no repentance or amendment in the grave, whither we are all hasting." When once that *closing scene* has advanced, we shall have no other part to act on this *earthly theatre.* Then, the sluggard, who has slumbered away life in a criminal inactivity, must lie down in hopeless distress and everlasting sorrow. Then, that awful doom will take place, "He that is *holy*, let him be holy still; and he that is *filthy*, let him be filthy for ever."

Is it so, my soul? is this the *only, only* time

allotted for obtaining the great reward, and making thy salvation sure? And art thou lulled in a *vain security*, or dreaming in a *supine inadvertency?* Start, O! start from thy trance; gird up the loins of thy mind, and work while it is day; improve the present seed-time, that eternity may yield a joyful harvest. We especially, who are watchmen in *Israel*, and ministers of the glorious Gospel; may *we* be awakened by this consideration to all assiduity in our holy office. Some or other of *our people* are ever and anon departing into the invisible state; all *our friends* are making incessant approaches to their long home; and we *ourselves* shall very shortly be transmitted to the confinement of the tomb. *This* is the favourable juncture, wherein alone we can contribute to their endless welfare; this is the crisis, the all-important *crisis*, of their final felicity. Instantly therefore, let us pour in our wholesome instructions; instantly, let us ply them with our earnest exhortations. A moment's delay may be an irreparable loss; may be irretrievable ruin. While we procrastinate, a fatal stroke may intervene, and place *us* beyond the power of administering; or place *them* beyond all possibility of receiving any spiritual good.

How frequently is the face of nature *changed;* and, by changing, made more *agreeable!* The long-continued glitter of the day, renders the soothing shades of the evening doubly welcome; nor does the morn ever purple the east with so engaging a lustre, as after the gloom of a dark and dismal night At present, a *calm* of tranquility is spread through the universe. The weary winds have forgot to blow; the gentle gales have fanned themselves asleep; not so much as a single leaf nods; even the quivering aspin rests; *and not one*

breath curls o'er the stream. Sometime, on the contrary, the *tempest* summons all the forces of the air, and pours itself with resistless fury from the angry north. The whole atmosphere is tossed into tumultuous confusion, and the watery world is heaved to the clouds. The astonished mariner, and his straining vessel, now scale the rolling mountain, and hang dreadfully visible on the broken surge: now shoot, with headlong impetuosity, into the yawning gulf; and neither hulk nor mast is seen. The storm sweeps over the continent, raves along the city streets, struggles through the forest boughs, and terrifies the savage nations with a howl more wildly horrid than their own. The knotty oaks bend before the blast, their iron trunks groan, and their stubborn limbs are dashed to the ground; the lofty dome rocks, and even the solid tower totters on its basis.

Such variations are kindly contrived, and with an evident condescension to the fickleness of our taste; because, a perpetual repetition of the *same* objects would create satiety and *disgust;* therefore, the indulgent Father of our race has diversified the universal scene, and bid every appearance bring with it the charm of novelty. This circumstance is *beneficial* as well as *entertaining.* Providence, ever gracious to mortals, ever intent upon promoting our felicity, has taken care to mingle in the constitution of things what is pleasing to our imagination, with what is serviceable to our interests. The piercing winds and rugged aspect of winter, render the balmy gales and flowery scenes of spring peculiarly delightful. At the same time the keen frosts mellow the soil and prepare it for the hand of industry; the rushing rains impregnate the glebe, and fit it to become a magazine of plenty. The earth

is a great *laboratory;* and *December's* cold collects the gross materials, wich are *sublimated* by the refining warmth of *May*. The air is a pure elastic fluid; and were it always to remain in *this* motionless serenity, it would lose much of its active spring: was it never agitated by *those* wholesome concussions, it would contract a noisome, perhaps a pestilential taint; in which cases, our respiration, instead of purifying, would corrupt the vital juices; instead of supplying us with refreshment, would be a source of diseases; or every gasp we draw might be unavoidable death. How then should we admire, how should we adore, that happy union of benignity and wisdom, which, from a *variety* of dispensations, produces an *uniformity* of good; produces a perpetual succession of delights, and an uninterrupted series of advantages.

The *darkness* is now at its height, and I cannot but admire the obliging manner of its taking place. It comes not with a blunt and abrupt incivility, but makes gentle and respectful advances. A *precipitate* transition from the splendours of day to all the horrors of midnight, would be inconvenient and frightful; it would bewilder the traveller in his journey, it would strike the creation with amazement, and, perhaps, be pernicious to the organs of sight. Therefore the gloom rushes not upon us instantaneously, but increases by slow degrees; and, sending *twilight* before as its *harbinger*, decently advertises us of its approach. By this means, we are neither alarmed nor incommoded by the change, but are able to take all suitable and timely measures for its reception. Thus graciously has Providence regulated, not only the *grand vicissitudes* of the seasons, but also the *common interchanges* of light and darkness, with an apparent reference to our comfort.

Now, the fierce *inhabitants* of the *forest* forsake their dens. A thousand grim forms, a thousand growling monsters pace the desert. Death is in their jaws, while, stung with hunger, and athirst for blood, they roam their nightly rounds. Unfortunate the *traveller*, who is overtaken by the night in those dismal wilds! How must he stand aghast, at the mingled yell of ravenous throats, and lions roaring after their prey! Defend him propitious Heaven! or else he must see his endearing spouse, and hail his native home, no more! Now, the prowling wolf, like a murderous ruffian, dogs the shepherd's footsteps, and besets his bleating charge. The fox, like a crafty felon, steals to the thatched cottage, and carries off the feathered booty.

Happy for the world, were these the only destroyers that walk in darkness. But, alas! there are savages in human shape; who muffled in shades, infest the abodes of civilized life. The *sons of violence* make choice of this season, to perpetrate the most outrageous acts of wrong and robbery. The *adulterer* waiteth for the twilight; and, baser than the villain on the highway, betrays the honour of his bosom-friend. Now, *faction* forms her close cabals, and whispers her traitorous insinuations. Now, *rebellion* plants her accursed plots, and prepares the train to blow a nation into ruin. Now, crimes which hide their odious heads in the day, haunt the seats of society, and stalk through the gloom with audacious front. Now, the *vermin* of the *stews* crawl from their lurking holes, to wallow in sin, and spread contagion through the night; each soothing himself, with the fond notion, that all is safe; that no eye sees.

Are they then concealed? Preposterous madmen! To draw the curtain between their infamous

practices and a little set of mortals, but lay them open to all these chaste and *wakeful eyes* of heaven! As though the moon and stars were made to light men to their revels, and not to God. Are they then concealed? No, truly. Was every one of these vigilant luminaries closed, an eye *keener* than the lightning's flash, an eye *brighter* than ten thousand suns, beholds their every motion. Their thickest shades are beaming day to the jealous Inspector, and supreme Judge of human actions. Deluded creatures! have ye not heard, have ye not read, "that clouds and darkness are his majestic residence?" In that very gloom, to which you fly for covert, he erects his throne. What you reckon your *screen* is the bar of his tribunal. O! remember this! Stand in awe, and sin not. Remember that the great and terrible God *is about your path*, when you take your midnight range; *is about your bed*, when you indulge the loose desire; *and spies out all your ways*, be they ever so secretly conducted or so artfully disguised.

Some minutes ago, a passenger crossed along the road. His horse's foot struck the ground, and fetched fire from a flint. My eye, though at a distance, catched the view, and saw with *great clearness*, the transient sparkles; of which, had I been ever so near, I should not have discerned the *least glimpse* under the blaze of day. So, when sickness has drawn a *veil* over the gayety of our hearts; when misfortunes have eclipsed the splendour of our outward circumstances; how many *important convictions* present themselves with the brightest evidence! Under the sunshine of prosperity, they lay undiscovered; but, when some intervening cloud has darkened the scene, they emerge from their obscurity, and even glitter upon our minds. Then,

the *world*, that delusive cheat, confesses her emptiness; but, Jesus, the bright, and morning-star, beams forth with inimitable lustre. Then *vice* loses all her fallacious allurements; that painted strumpet is horrible as the hags of hell: but *virtue*, despised virtue, gains loveliness from a lowering Providence, and treads the shades with more than mortal charms. May this reconcile me, and all the *sons of sorrow*, to our appointed share of suffering! If tribulation tend to dissipate the inward darkness, and pour heavenly day upon our minds; welcome distress; welcome disappointment; welcome whatever our froward flesh or peevish passion would *miscal* calamities. *These light afflictions, which are but for a moment*, shall sit easy upon our spirits; since they befriend our knowledge, promote our faith, and so *work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

How has this darkness snatched every splendid and graceful object from my sight! It has dashed the sponge over the pictures of spring, and destroyed all the *delicate distinctions* of things. Where are now the fine tinges, which so lately charmed me from the glowing parterre? The blush is struck out from the cheeks of the rose, and the snowy hue is dropped from the lily. I cast my eyes toward a magnificent seat, but the aspiring columns and fair-expanded front are mingled in rude confusion. Without the sun, all the elegance of the blooming world is a *mere blank*, all the symmetry of architecture is a *shapeless heap.*

Is not this an expressive emblem of the loveliness which the *Son of Righteousness* transfuses into all that is amiable? Were it not for Jesus and his merits, I should sigh with anguish of spirit, even while I rove through ranks of the most beautiful

flowers, or breathe amidst a wilderness of sweets. Were it not for Jesus and his merits, I should roam like some *disconsolate spectre*, even through the smiles of creation and the caresses of fortune. My conversation in this world, though dressed in the most engaging forms of external pleasure, would be like the passage of a *condemned malefactor* through enammelled meadows and bowers of bliss, to be broke upon the wheel, or to expire on the rack. But a daily reflection on the Lamb's atoning blood; a comfortable trust that my soul is reconciled through this divine expiation; this is the ray, the golden ray, which irradiates the face of the universe. This is the *oil* of *beauty*, which makes all things wear a cheerful aspect; and the *oil* of *gladness*, which disposes the spectator to behold them with delight. This, this is the secret charm, which teacheth nature, in all her prospects and all her productions, so exquisitely to please.

"Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labour, till the evening." But then his strength fails, his sprits flag, and he stands in need, not only of some respite from toil, but of some kindly and sovereign refreshments. What an admirable provision for this purpose is *sleep!* Sleep introduces a most welcome vacation both for the soul and body. The exercises of the brain, and the labours of the hand are at once discontinued; so that the weary limbs repair their exhausted vigour, while the *pensive* thoughts drop their load of sorrows, and the *busy* ones rest from the fatigues of application. Most reviving cordial! equally beneficial to our animal and intellectual powers. It supplies the fleshly machine, and keeps all its nice movements in a proper posture for easy play. It animates the thinking faculties with fresh alacrity, and rekindles their

ardour for the studies of the dawn. Without these enlivening recruits, how soon would the most robust constitution be wasted into a *walking skeleton*, and the most learned sage degenerate into a *hoary idiot?* Some time ago I beheld with surprise poor *Florio*. His air was wild, his countenance meager, his thoughts roving, and speech disconcerted. Inquiring the cause of this strange alteration, I was informed, that for several nights he had not closed his eyes in sleep; for want of which *noble restorative*, that sprightly youth, (who was once the life of the discourse, and the darling of the company,) is become a spectacle of misery and horror.

How many of my fellow-creatures are, at this very instant, confined to the bed of languishing, and complaining, with that illustrious sufferer of old *Wearisome nights are appointed to me!* Instead of indulging soft repose, they are counting the tedious hours, telling every striking clock, or measuring the very moments by their throbbing pulse. How many, harassed with *pain*, most passionately long to make some little truce with their agonies in peaceful slumbers! How many, sick with *disquietude*, and restless even on their downy pillows, would purchase this transient oblivion of their woes, almost at any rate! That which wealth cannot procure, which multitudes sigh for in vain, thy God has bestowed on thee, times out of number. The *welcome visitant*, punctual at the needed hour, has entered thy chamber, and poured his poppies round thy couch; has gently closed thy eye-lids, and shed his slumberous dews over all thy senses.

Since sleep is so absolutely necessary, so inestimably valuable, observe what a *fine apparatus* Almighty goodness has made, to accommodate us with the balmy blessing. With how kind a precaution

he removes whatever might obstruct its access, or impede its influence! He draws around us the *curtain* of *darkness*, which inclines us to a drowsy indolence, and conceals every object that might too strongly agitate the sense. He conveys *peace* into our *apartments*, and imposes silence on the whole creation. Every animal is bidden to tread softly, or rather to cease from its motion, when man is retiring to his repose. May we not discern, in this gracious disposition of things, the tender care of a *nursing mother*, who hushes every noise, and secludes every disturbance, when she has laid the child of her love to rest? So, by such soothing circumstances, and gently-working opiates, *he giveth to his beloved sleep.*

Another signal instance of a Providence intent upon our welfare, is, that we are preserved *safe* in the hours of *slumber*. How are we then lost to all apprehension of danger, even though the murderer be at our bed-side, or his naked sword at our breast! Destitute of all concern for ourselves, we are unable to *think of*, much more to *provide for* our own security. At these moments, therefore, we lie open to innumerable perils: perils, from the resistless rage of flames: perils, from the insiduous artifices of thieves, or the outrageous violence of robbers: perils, from the *irregular workings* of our own thoughts, and especially from the incursions of our spiritual enemy.

What dreadful mischief might that restless, that implacable *adversary* of *mankind* work, was there not an invisible hand to control his rage, and protect poor mortals! What scenes of horror might he represent to our imaginations, and "scare us with dreams, or terrify us with visions!" But the *Keeper of Israel*, who never slumbers nor sleeps,

interposes in our behalf, at once to *cherish* us under his wings, and to *defend* us with a shield. It is said of *Solomon*, "that threescore valiant men were about his bed, all expert in war, every one with his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night." But one greater than *Solomon*, one mightier than myriads of armed hosts, even the great Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, he vouchsafes to *encamp about our house*, to watch over our sleeping minutes, and to stop all the avenues of ill. O! the unwearied and condescending goodness of our Creator, who *lulls* us to our rest, by bringing on the silent shades; and *plants* his own ever-watchful eye as our *sentinel*, while we enjoy the needful repose.

Reason now resigns her sedate office, and *fancy*, extravagant fancy, leads the mind through a maze of vanity. The head is crowded with false images, and tantalized with the most ridiculous misapprehensions of things. Some are expatiating amidst *fairy fields*, and gathering garlands of visionary bliss, while their bodies are stretched on a wisp of straw, and sheltered by the cobwebs of a barn. Others, quite insensible of their rooms of state, are mourning in a doleful *dungeon*, or struggling with the raging billows. Perhaps, with hasty steps, they climb the craggy cliff, and with real anxiety fly from the imaginary danger. Or else, benumbed with sudden fear, and finding themselves unable to escape, they gave up at once their hopes and their efforts; and, though reclined on a couch of ivory, are sinking all helpless and distressed, in the furious whirlpool. So unaccountable are the *vagaries* of the *brain*, while sleep maintains its dominion over the limbs.

But is this the only season, when absurd and in-

coherent irregularities play their magic on our minds? Are there not those who *dream*, even in their *waking* moments? Some pride themselves in a notion of superior excellency, because the royal favour has annexed a few splendid titles to their names, or because the dying silk-worm has bequeathed her finest threads to cover their nakedness. Others congratulate their own signal happiness, because loads of golden lumber are amassed together in their coffers: or promise themselves a most superlative felicity indeed, when some thousands more are added to the useless heap. Nor are there wanting others, who gape after *substantial* satisfaction from *airy* applause, and flatter themselves with, I know not what, immortality in the momentary buzz of renown. Are any of these a whit more reasonable in their opinions, than the poor ragged wretch in his reveries; who, while snoring under a hedge, exults in the possession of his stately palace and sumptuous furniture? If persons, who are *very vassals* to their own *domineering* passions, and led captive by numberless temptations; if these persons pique themselves with a conceit of their liberty, and fancy themselves the *generous* and *gallant* spirits of the age; where is the difference between theirs and the madman's frenzy; who, though chained to the floor, is throned in thought, and weilding an imaginary sceptre? In a word, as many as borrow their dignity from a plume of feathers, or the gaudy trappings of fortune; as many as send their souls to seek for bliss in the blandishments of sense, or in any thing short of the divine favour, and a well-grounded hope of the incorruptible inheritance; what are they, but dreamers with their eyes open; *delirious*, though in *health*?

Would you see their picture drawn to the very life, and the success of their schemes calculated with the utmost exactness, cast your eyes upon that fine representation exhibited by the prophet: *It shall be even as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.* Such is the race, and such the prize of all those candidates for honour and joy, who run wide from the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. They live in vanity, and lie in woe. Awaken us, merciful Lord, from those *noon-tide trances!* Awaken us, while conviction may turn to our advantage, and not serve only to increase our torment. O! let our "eyes be enlightened, to discern the things that are excellent;" and no longer be imposed upon by fantastic appearances, which, however *pompous* they may seem, will prove more *empty* than the visions of the night, more *transient* than the dream that is forgotten.

Having mentioned sleep and dreams, let me once again consider those remarkable incidents of our frame: so very remarkable, that I may venture to call them a kind of experimental *mystery*, and little less than a standing *miracle*. Behold the most *vigorous constitution*, when stretched on the bed of ease, and totally resigned to the slumbers of the night: its activity is oppressed with fetters of indolence: its strength is consigned over to a temporary annihilation; the nerves are like a bow unstrung, and the whole animal system is like a motionless log. Behold a person of the most *delicate sensations*, and *amiable dispositions*; his eyes, though thrown wide open, admit not the visual ray; at

least distinguish not objects: his ears, with the organs unimpaired, and articulate accents beating upon the drum, perceive not the sound; at least, apprehend not the meaning: the senses, and their exquisitely fine feelings, are overwhelmed with an unaccountable stupefaction. You call him a *social* creature; but where are his social affections? He knows not the father that begat him; and takes no notice of the friend that is as his own soul. The wife of his bosom may expire by his side, and he lie no more concerned than a barbarian. The children of his body may be tortured with the severest pangs, and he, even in the same chamber, remain untouched with the least commiseration. Behold the most *ingenious scholar*, whose judgment is piercing, and able to trace the most intricate difficulties of science; his taste refined, and quick to relish all the beauties of sentiment and composition: yet at this juncture the thinking faculties are unhinged, and the intellectual economy quite disconcerted. Instead of close-connected reasonings, nothing but a disjointed huddle of absurd ideas; instead of well-digested principles, nothing but a disorderly jumble of crude conceptions. The most palpable delusions impose upon his imagination. The whole night passes, and he frequently mistakes it for a single minute; is not sensible of the transition, hardly sensible of any duration.

Yet no sooner does the morning dawn, and daylight enter the room, but this strange enchantment vanishes. The man awakes, and finds himself *possessed* of all the valuable endowments, which for several hours were suspended or lost. His sinews are braced, and fit for action; his senses are alert and keen. The romantic visionary brightens into the master of reason. The frozen or benumb-

ed affections melt with tenderness, and glow with benevolence; and, what is beyond measure surprising, the intoxicated mind works itself sober, not by *slow degrees*, but in the *twinkling* of an eye recovers from its purturbation. Why does not the stupor which deadens all the nice operations of the animal powers, hold fast its possession? When the thoughts are once disadjusted, why are they not always in confusion? How is it, that they are rallied in a moment; and, from the wildest irregularity, reduced to the most orderly array? From an inactivity resembling death, how is the body so *suddenly* restored to vigour and agility? From extravagances bordering upon madness, how is the understanding *instantaneously* re-established in sedateness and harmony? Surely "this is the Lord's doing, and it should be marvellous in our eyes;" should awaken our gratitude, and inspire our praise.

This is the time in which *ghosts* are supposed to make their appearance. Now the *timorous imagination* teems with phantoms, and creates numberless terrors to itself. Now dreary forms, in sullen state, stalk along the gloom; or, swifter than lightning, glide across the shades. Now voices more than mortal are heard from the echoing vaults, and groans issue from the hollow tombs. Now, melancholy spectres visit the ruins of ancient monasteries and frequent the solitary dwellings of the dead. They pass and repass, in unsubstantial images, along the forsaken galleries; or take their determined stand over some lamented grave. How often has the school-boy fetched a long circuit, and trudged many a needless step, in order to avoid the haunted-church-yard? Or, if necessity, sad necesity, has obliged him to cross the spots where *human skulls* are lodged below, and the *baleful yews* shed

supernumerary horrors above, a thousand hideous stories rush into his memory. Fear adds wings to his feet; he scarce touches the ground, dares not once look behind him, and blesses his good fortune, if no frightful sound purred at his heels, if no ghastly shape bolted upon his sight.

'Tis strange to observe the excessive timidity which possesses many people's minds on this *fanciful occasion;* while they are void of all concern on others of the most *tremendous import*. Those who are startled, in any dark and lonely walk, at the *very apprehension* of a single spectre, are nevertheless unimpressed at the *sure prospect* of entering into a whole world of disembodied beings; nay, are without any emotions of awe, though they know themselves to be hastening into the presence of the Great, Infinite, and Eternal Spirit. Should some pale messenger from the regions of the dead draw back our curtains at the hour of midnight, and, appointing some particular place, say, as the horrid apparition to *Brutus*, "*I'll meet thee there:*" I believe the boldest heart would feel something like a panic, would seriously think upon the adventure, and be in pain for the event. But when a voice from heaven cries, in the awakening language of the prophet, "*Prepare to meet thy God, O* Israel!" how little is the warning regarded! How soon is it forgot! Preposterous stupidity! to be utterly *unconcerned*, where it is the truest wisdom to take the alarm; and to be *all trepidation*, where there is nothing really terrible! Do thou, my soul, remember thy Saviour's admonition: "*I will forewarn you, when you shall fear.* Fear not these imaginary horrors of the night; but fear that awful Being, whose revelation of himself, though with expressions of peculiar mercy, made *Moses*, his

favourite servant, tremble exceedingly ; whose manifestation, when he appears with purposes of inexorable vengeance, will make *mighty conquerors*, who were familiar with dangers, and estranged to dismay, call upon the mountains to fall on them, and the rocks to cover them ; the menace of whose majestic eye, when he comes attended with thousand thousands of his immortal hosts, will make the very heavens cleave asunder, and the earth flee away. O ! dread his displeasure ; secure his favour ; and then thou mayst commit all thy other anxieties to the wind. Thou mayst laugh at every other fear."

This brings to my mind a memorable and amazing occurrence, recorded in the book of *Job ;* which is I think, no inconsiderable proof of the *real existence* of apparitions, on some *very extraordinary* emergencies ; while it discountenances those legions of idle tales, which superstition has raised and credulity received ; since it teaches us, that if, at any time. those visitants from the unknown world, render themselves perceivable by mortals, it is not upon any errand of frivolous consequence ; but, to *convey intelligences* of the utmost moment, or to *work impressions* of the highest advantage.

'Twas in the *dead of night.* All nature lay shrouded in darkness. Every creature was buried in sleep. The most profound silence reigned through the universe. In these solemn moments, *Eliphaz* alone, all wakeful and solitary, was musing upon sublime and heavenly subjects. When lo ! an awful being, from the invisible realms, burst into his apartment. *A spirit passed before his face.* Astonishment seized the beholder. His bones shivered within him, his flesh trembled all over him ; and the hair of his head stood erect with horror. Sudden and unexpected was the appearance of the

phantom; not such its departure. *It stood still*, to present itself more fully to his view. It made a solemn pause, to prepare his mind for some momentous message. After which, a voice was heard: a voice, for the importance of its meaning, worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance; for the solemnity of its delivery, enough to alarm a heart of stone. It spoke; and this was the purport of its words; "*Shall man, frail man, be just before the mighty God? Shall* even *the most accomplished of mortals be pure in the sight of his maker? Behold*, and consider it attentively. *He put no* such *trust in his* most exalted *servants*, as should bespeak them incapable of defect; and *his* very *angels he charged with folly;* as sinking, even in the highest perfection of their holiness, infinitely beneath his transcendent glories; as failing, even in all the fidelity of their obedience, inexpressibly short of the homage due to his adorable majesty. If angelic natures must not presume to justify either themselves, or their services, before uncreated purity, *how much more* absurd is such a notion, how much more impious such an attempt, in *them that dwell in houses of clay;* whose original is from the dust, and whose state is all imperfection!"

I would observe from hence, the very singular necessity of that *poverty* of *spirit*, which entirely *renounces* its own attainments; and most thankfully *submits* to the righteousness of the incarnate God. To inculcate this lesson, the Son of the Blessed came down from heaven; and pressed no other principle with so repeated an importunity on his hearers. To instil the same doctrine, the Holy Ghost touched the lips of the apostles with sacred eloquence; and made it an eminent part of their commission, "to demolish every high imagination."

That no expedient might be wanting to give it a deep and lasting efficacy on the human mind, a phantom arises from the valley of the shadow of death, or a teacher descends from the habitation of spirits.—Whatever then we neglect, let us not neglect to cultivate *this grace*, which has been so variously taught, so powerfully enforced.

Hark! *a doleful voice*—with sudden starts, and hideous screams, it disturbs the silence of the peaceful night. 'Tis the *screech-owl*, sometimes in frantic, sometimes in disconsolate accents, uttering her woes. She flies the vocal grave, and shuns the society of all the feathered choir. The blooming gardens and flowery meads have no charms for her. Obscene shades, ragged ruins, and walls overgrown with ivy, are her favourite haunts. Above, the mouldering precipice nods, and threatens a fall; below, the toad crawls, or the poisonous adder hisses. The sprightly morning, which awakens other animals into joy, administers no pleasure to this gloomy recluse. Even the smiling face of day is her aversion; and all its lovely scenes create nothing but uneasiness.

So, just so, would it fare with the *ungodly*, were it possible to suppose their admission into the chaste and bright abodes of endless felicity. They would find nothing but disappointment and shame, even at the fountain-head of happiness and honour. For how could the tongue habituated to *profaneness*, taste any delight in the harmonious adorations of heaven? How could the lips cankered with *slander*, relish the raptures of everlasting praise? Where would be the satisfaction of the *vain* beauty, or the *supercilious* grandee: since, in the temple of the skies, no incense of flattery would be addressed to the former, nor any obsequious homage

paid to the latter? The spotless and inconceivable purity of the blessed God would *flash* confusion on the lascivious eye. The envious mind must be on a *rack* of self-tormenting *passions*, to observe millions of happy beings, shining in all the perfections of glory, and solacing themselves in the fulness of joy. In short, the unsanctified soul, amidst holy and triumphant spirits, even in the refined regions of bliss and immortality, would be, like this melancholy bird, *dislodged* from her darksome retirement, and *imprisoned* under the beams of day.

The voice of this creature screaming at our windows, or of the raven croaking over our houses, is, they say, a *token* of approaching *death*. There are persons, who would regard such an incident with no small degree of solicitude. Trivial as it is, it would damp their spirits, perhaps break their rest. One cannot but wonder, that people should suffer themselves to be affrighted at such *fantastical*, and yet be quite unaffected with *real* presages of their dissolution. Real presages of this awful event, address us from every quarter. What are these *incumbent glooms* which overwhelm the world, but a kind of *pall* provided for nature; and an image of that long night, which will quickly cover the inhabitants of the whole earth? What an affinity has the sleep, which will very soon weigh down my drowsy eye-lids, with that state of entire cessation, in which all my senses must be laid aside! The silent chamber, and the bed of slumber, are a very significant representation of the land, where all things are hushed, all things are forgotten. What meant that deep *death-bell note*, which, the other evening, saddened the air? Laden with heaviest accents, it struck our ears, and seemed to knock at the door of our hearts. Surely, it brought

a message to surviving mortals, and thus the tidings ran: "Mortals, the destroyer of your race is on his way. The last enemy has begun the pursuit, and is gaining ground upon you every moment. His paths are strewed with heaps of slain. Even now, his javelin has laid one of your neighbours in the dust: and will soon, very soon, aim the *inevitable blow* at each of your lives."

We need not go down to the charnal house, nor carry our search into the repositories of the dead, in order to find memorials of our impending doom. A multitude of these remembrancers are planted in all our paths, and point the heedless passengers to their long home. I can hardly enter a considerable town, but I meet the funeral procession, or the mourners going about the streets. The *hatchment* suspended on the wall, or the *crape* streaming in the air, are silent intimations, that both *rich* and *poor* have been emptying their houses and replenishing their sepulchres. I can scarce join in any conversation, but mention is made of some that are given over by the physician, and hovering on the confines of eternity; of others that have just dropped their clay amidst weeping friends, and are gone to appear before the judge of all the earth. There's not a *news-paper* comes to my hand, but amidst all its entertaining narrations, reads several serious *lectures* of *mortality*. What else are the repeated accounts of age, worn out by slow-consuming sicknesses; of youth, dashed to pieces by some sudden stroke of casualty; of patriots, exchanging their seats in the senate, for a lodging in the tomb; of misers, resigning their breath, and (O relentless destiny!) leaving their very riches for others? Even the vehicles of our amusement are registers of the deceased; and the voice of *fame* seldom sounds, but in concert with a *knell*.

These monitors crowd every place ; not so much as the scenes of our diversion excepted. What are the decorations of our public buildings, and the most elegant furniture of our parlours, but the imagery of death, and trophies of the tomb? That marble bust; and those gilded pictures; how solemnly they *recognize* the fate of others, and speakingly *remind* us of our own! I see, I hear, and O! I feel, this great truth. It is interwoven with my constitution. The frequent decays of the structure foretel its final ruin. What are all the pains that have been darted through my limbs; what every disease that has assaulted my health; but the *advanced guards* of the foe? What are the languors and weariness that attend the labours of each revolving day; but the more *secret* practices of the adversary, slowly undermining the earthly tabernacle?

Amidst so many notices, shall we go on thoughtless and unconcerned? Can none of these prognostics, which are sure oracles, awaken our attention, and engage our circumspection? *Noah*, 'tis written, *being warned of God, prepared an ark.* Imitate, my soul, imitate this excellent example. Admonished by such a cloud of witnesses, be continually putting thyself in a readiness for the last change. Let not that day, of which thou hast so many infallible signs, come upon thee unawares. Get the *ivy untwined*, and thy affections disentangled from this enchanting world; that thou mayst be able to quit it without reluctance. Get the dreadful *hand-writing cancelled*, and all thy sins blotted out; that thou mayst depart in peace, and have nothing to fear at the decisive tribunal. Get, O! get thyself interested in the Redeemer's *merits*, and transformed into his sacred *image;* then shalt thou

be meet for the inheritance of saints in light, and mayst even desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.

Sometimes, in my evening walk, I have heard

> ———The wakeful bird
> Sing darkling, and, in shadiest covert hid,
> Tune her nocturnal note.

How different the *airs* of this charming songster from those harsh and boding *outcries!* The little creature ran through all the variations of music, and showed herself mistress of every grace which constitutes or embellishes harmony. Sometimes she swells a manly throat, and her song kindles into ardour. The tone is so *bold*, and strikes with such energy, you would imagine the sprightly serenader in the very next thicket. Anon, the strain *languishes*, and the mournful warbler melts into tenderness. The melancholy notes just steal upon the shades, and faintly touch your ear; or, in soft and sadly-pleasing accents, they seem to die along the distant vale. Silence is pleased, and night listens to the thrilling tale.

What an invitation is this, to slip away from the thronged city! This coy and modest minstrel entertains only the *lovers of retirement:* those who are carousing over their bowls, or ranting at the riotous club, lose this feast of harmony. In like manner, the pleasures of religion, and the joy of reconciliation with God; the satisfactions arising from an established interest in Christ, and from the prospect of a blissful immortality; these are all lost to the mind that is ever *in the crowd* and dares not, or delights not, to retire into itself. Are we charmed with the nightingale's song? Do we wish to have it nearer, and hear it oftener? Let us seek

a renewed heart, and resigned will; a conscience that whispers peace, and passions that are tuned by grace. Then shall we never want a melody in our own breasts, far more *musically pleasing* than sweet *Philolmela's* sweetest strains.

As different as the voices of these birds, are the *circumstances* of those few persons who continue awake. Some are squandering, pearls shall I say, or kingdoms? No; but what is unspeakably more precious, time; squandering this inestimable talent, with the most senseless and wanton prodigality. Not content with allowing a few *spare minutes* for the purpose of necessary recreation, they lavish many hours, devote *whole nights*, to that idle diversion of shuffling, ranging, and detaching a set of painted pasteboards. Others, instead of this busy trifling, act the part of their own tormentors; they even piquet themselves, and call it amusement; they are torn by wild horses, yet term it a sport, What else is the *gamester's* practice? His mind is stretched on the tenter-hooks of anxious suspense, and agitated by the fiercest extremes of hope and fear; while the dice are rattling, his heart is throbbing; his fortune is tottering; and, possibly at the very next throw, the one sinks in the gulf of ruin, the other is hurried into the rage of distraction.

Some, snatched from the bloom of health and the lap of plenty, are confined to the *chamber* of *sickness*, where they are constrained, either to plunge into the everlasting world in an unprepared condition, or else (sad alternative!) to think over all the follies of a heedless life, and all the bitterness of approaching death. The disease rages; it baffles the force of medicine, and urges the reluctant wretch to the brink of the precipice; while furies rouse the conscience, and point at the bottomless pit be-

low. Perhaps his *drooping mother*, deprived long ago of the husband of her bosom, and bereft of all her other offspring, is even now, receiving the blow which consummates her calamities. In vain she tries to assuage the sorrows of a beloved son; in vain she attempts, with her tender offices, to prolong a life dearer than her own. He faints in her arms, he bows his head, he sinks in death. Fatal, doubly fatal that last expiring pang! While it dislodges the unwilling soul, it rends an *only child* from the yearning embraces of a parent; and tears away the support of her age from a disconsolate widow.

While those long for a reprieve, *others* invite the stroke. Quite weary of the world, with a restless impatience they sigh for dissolution: some, pining away under the tedious decays of an incurable *consumption;* or gasping for breath, and almost suffocated by an inundation of *dropsical* waters. On some, a relentless *cancer* has fastened its envenomed teeth, and is gnawing them, though in the midst of bodily vigour, in the midst of pitying friends, gradually to death. Others are on a rack of agonies by convulsive fits of the *stone*. O! how the pain writhes their limbs; how the sweat bedews their flesh; and their eyeballs wildly roll! Methinks, the night condoles with these her distressed children, and sheds dewy tears over their sorrowful abodes. But, of all mortals, *they* are the most exquisitely miserable who groan beneath the pressure of a *melancholy* mind, or smart under the lashes of a *resentful* conscience. Though robed in ermine, or covered with jewels, the state of a slave chained to the galleys, or of an exile condemned to the mines, is a perfect paradise compared with theirs.

O! that the *votaries* of *mirth*, whose life is a

continued round of merriment and whim, would bestow one serious reflection on this *variety* of human *woes!* It might teach them to be less enamoured with the few languid sweets that are thinly scattered through this vale of tears, and environed with such a multitude of ragged thorns; it might teach them no longer to dance away their years with a giddy *rambling impulse*; but to aspire, with a determined aim, after those happy regions, where delights, abundant and unimbittered flow.

Can there be circumstances which a man of wisdom would more earnestly deprecate, than these several instances of grievous tribulation? There are, and what is very astonishing, they are frequently the desire and the choice of those who fancy themselves the sole heirs of happiness; those, I mean, who are launching out into the depths of *extravagance*, and running excessive lengths of *riot;* who are prostituting their reputation, and sacrificing their peace, to the gratification of their lusts; sapping the foundation of their health in debaucheries; or shipwrecking the interests of their families in their bowls; and, what is worse, are forfeiting the joys of an eternal heaven for the *sordid* satisfactions of the beast, for the *transitory* sensations of an hour. Ye slaves of appetite, how far am I from envying your gross sensualities and voluptuous revels! Little, ah! little are you sensible, that while indulgence showers her roses, and luxury diffuses her odours, they scatter *poisons* also, and shed unheeded *bane*, evils, incomparably more malignant than the wormwood and gall of the sharpest affliction. Since death is in the drunkard's cup, and worse than poniard's in the harlot's embrace; may it ever be the privilege of the man whom I love, to go without his share of these *pestilent sweets.*

Abundance of living sparks glitter in the lanes, and twinkle under the hedges. I suppose, they are the *glow-worms*, which have lighted their little lamps, and obtained leave, through the absence of the sun, to play a feeble beam. A faint glimmer just serves to render them perceivable, without tending at all to dissipate the shades, or making any amends for the departed day. Should some weather-beaten traveller, dropping with wet, and shivering with cold, hover round this *mimicry* of *fire*, in order to dry his garments, and warm his benumbed limbs; should some bewildered traveller, groping for his way in a starless night, and trackless desert, take one of these *languid tapers*, as a light to his feet, and a lantern to his paths; how certainly would both the one and the other be frustrated of their expectation! And are *they* more likely to succeed, who, neglecting that sovereign balm which distilled from the cross, apply any *carnal* diversion to heal the anxiety of the mind? who, deaf to the infallible decisions of revelation, resign themselves over to the erroneous *conjectures* of *reason*, in order to find the way that leadeth unto life? or lastly, who have recourse to the *froth* of this vain world, for a satisfactory portion, and a substantial happiness? Their conduct is no degree wiser, their disappointment equally sure, and their miscarriage infinitely more disastrous. To speak in the delicate language of a sacred writer, "they sow the wind, and will reap the whirlwind."

To speak more plainly; the pleasures of the world, which, we are *all* so prone to doat upon; and the powers of fallen reason, which *some* are so apt to idolize, are not only vain but treacherous; not only a *painted flame*, like these sparkling animals, but much like those unctuous exhalations, which

arise from the marshy ground, and often dance before the eyes of the benighted, wayfaring man. Kindled into a sort of fire, they personate a guide, and seem to offer their service; but, blazing with *delusive light*, mislead their follower into hidden pits, headlong precipices, and unfathomable gulfs; where, far from his beloved friends, far from all hopes of succour, the unhappy wanderer is swallowed up and lost.

Not long ago, we observed a very surprising appearance in the western sky; a *prodigious star* took its flaming route through those coasts, and trailed, as it passed, a tremendous length of fire, almost over half the heavens. Some, I imagine, viewed the portentous stranger with much the same anxious amazement as *Belshazzar* beheld the handwriting upon the wall. Some looked upon it as a *bloody flag*, hung out by divine resentment over a guilty world. Some, read in its glaring visage, the fate of nations, and the fall of kingdoms. To others, it shook, or seemed to shake, *pestilence* and *war* from its horrid hair. For my part, I am not so superstitious as to regard what every astrologer has to prognosticate upon the accession of a *comet* or the projection of its huge *vapoury train*. Nothing can be more precarious and unjustifiable, than to draw such conclusions from such events; since they neither are preternatural effects, nor do they throw the frame of things into any disorder. I would rather adore that Omnipotent Being, who rolled those stupendous orbs from his creating hand, and leads them, by his providential eye, through unmeasurable tracts of æther; who bids them now approach the sun, and glow with unsufferable ardours; now retreat to the utmost bounds of our planetary system, and make their entry among other worlds.

They are harmless visitants. I acquit them from the charge of causing, or being accessary to, desolating plagues. Would to God there were no other more formidable indications of *approaching judgment* or *impending ruin!* But, alas! when vice becomes predominant, and irreligion almost epidemical; when the sabbaths of a jealous God are notoriously profaned; and that "name, which is great, wonderful, and holy," is prostituted to the meanest, or abused to the most execrable purposes; when the worship of our great Creator and Preserver is banished from many of the most *conspicuous families*, and it is deemed a piece of rude impertinence so much as to mention the gracious Redeemer in our *genteel interviews;* when it passes for an elegant freedom of behaviour to ridicule the mysteries of Christianity, and a species of refined conversation to taint the air with lascivious hints; when those, who sit in the *scorner's chair*, sin with a high hand; and many of those, who wear the *professor's garb*, are destitute of the power, and content themselves with the mere form of godliness; when such is the state of a community, there is reason, too apparent reason, to be horribly afraid. Such *phenomena*, abounding in the moral world, are not fanciful but real omens. Will not an injured God "be avenged on such a nation as this?" Will he not be provoked to "sweep it with the besom of destruction?"

O! that the inhabitants of *Great Britain* would lay these alarming considerations to heart! The Lord of Hosts has commanded the sword of *civil discord* to return into its sheath. But have we returned, every one from his *evil ways?* Are we become a renewed people, devoted to a dying Saviour, and zealous of good works? What mean

those peals of sobs which burst from the *expiring cattle*? What mean those melancholy moans, where the lusty droves were wont to low? What mean those arrows of untimely death, discharged on our innocent and useful animals?

No wantonness or sloth has vitiated the blood of these laborious, temperate creatures. They have contracted no disease from unseasonable indulgences and inordinate revellings. The pure stream is their drink, the simple herb their repast. Neither care disturbs their sleep, nor passion inflames their breast. Whence then are they visited with such terrible disorders, as no prudence can prevent, nor any medicines heal? Surely, these calamities are the weapons of divine displeasure, and manifest chastisements of an evil generation. Surely God, the "God to whom vengeance belongeth," has still a controversy with our sinful land. And who can tell where the visitation will end? What a storm may follow these prelusive drops! O! that we may "hear the rod, and who hath appointed it!" Taught by these *penal effects* of our disobedience, may we remove the *accursed thing* from our tents, our practices, our hearts! May we turn from all ungodliness, before wrath come upon us to the ut termost, before iniquity prove our ruin!

Sometimes, at this hour, another most remarkable sight amuses the curious, and alarms the vulgar. A blaze of lambent meteors is kindled, or some very extraordinary *lights* are refracted, *in the* quarters of the *north*. The streams of radiance, like legions rushing to the engagement, meet and mingle; insomuch that the air seems to be all conflicting fire. Within a while they start from one another, and, like legions in precipitate flight, sweep each a separate way through the firmament. Now

they are quiescent; anon they are thrown into a quivering motion; presently the whole horizon is illuminated with the glancing flames: sometimes, with an aspect *awfully ludicrous*, they represent extravagant and antic vagaries: at other times you would suspect that some invisible hand was playing off the dumb *artillery* of the *skies*, and by a strange expedient, giving us the flash without the roar.

The villagers gaze at the spectacle, first with wonder, then with horror. A general *panic* seizes the country. Every heart throbs, and every face is pale. The crowds that flock together, instead of diminishing increase the dread. They catch contagion from each other's looks and words; while fear is in every eye, and every tongue speaks the language of terror. Some see *hideous shapes*, armies mixing in fierce encounter, or fields swimming with blood. Some foresee *direful events*, states overthrown, or mighty monarchs tottering on their thrones. Others, scared with still more frightful apprehensions, think of nothing but the *day* of *doom*. "Sure," says one, "the unalterable hour is struck, and the end of all things come." "See," replies another, "how the blasted stars look wan! Are not these the signs of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven?" "Jesus prepare us," cries a third, and lifts his eyes in devotion, "for the archangel's trump, and the great tribunal!"

If this *waving brightness*, which plays innocently over our heads, be so amazing to multitudes, what inexpressible consternation must overwhelm unthinking mortals when the *general conflagration* commences! The day, the dreadful day, is approaching, *in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and all the*

works that are therein shall be burnt up. That mighty hand, which once opened the windows from on high, and broke up the fountains of the great deep, will then unlock all the *magazines* of *fire*, and pour a *second deluge* upon the earth. The vengeful flames, kindled by the breath of the Almighty, spread themselves from the centre to the circumference. Nothing can withstand their impetuosity, nothing can escape their rage. Universal desolation attends their progress. Magnificent palaces, and solemn temples, are laid in ashes; spacious cities, and impregnable towers, are mingled in one smoking mass. Not only the productions of *human art*, but the works of *Almighty power* are fuel for the devouring element. The everlasting mountains melt, like the snows which cover their summit. Even vast oceans serve only to augment the inconceivable rapidity and fury of the blaze. O! how shall I, or others, stand undismayed amidst the glare of a *burning world*, unless the Lord Jehovah be our defence? How shall we be upheld in security, when the globe itself is sinking in the *fiery ruin*, unless the Rock of Ages be our support?

Behold! a new spectacle of wonder! The *moon* is making her entry on the eastern sky. See her rising in clouded majesty; opening, as it were, and asserting her original commission *to rule over the night*. All grand and stately, but somewhat sullied is her aspect. However, she *brightens* as she *advances*, and grows clearer as she climbs higher, till at length her silver loses all its dross; she unveils her peerless light, and becomes "the beauty of heaven, the glory of the stars;" delighting every eye, and cheering the whole world with the brightness of her appearance and the softness of her splen-

dours. O! thou queen of the shades! may it be my ambition to follow this thy instructive example! While others are found to transcribe the fashions of little courts, and to mimic personages of inferior state; be it mine to imitate thy *improving purity!* May my conduct become more unblemished, and my temper more refined, as I proceed farther and farther in my probationary course, may every sordid desire wear away, and every irregular appetite be gradually lost, as I make nearer approaches to the celestial mansions! Will not this be a comfortable evidence, that I too shall shine in my adored Redeemer's kingdom; shine with a *richer* lustre than that which radiates from thy resplendent orb; shine with an *unfading* lustre, when every ray that beams from thy beautious sphere is totally extinguished?

The day afforded us a variety of entertaining sights. These were all withdrawn at the accession of darkness. The stars, kindly officious, immediately lent us their aid. This served to *alleviate* the frown of night, rather than to *recover* the objects from their obscurity. A faint ray, scarcely reflected, and not from the entire surface of things, gave the straining eye a very imperfect glimpse, such as rather mocked than satisfied vision. Now the moon is risen, and has collected all her beams, the veil is taken off from the countenance of nature. I see the recumbent flocks; I see the green hedgerows, though without the feathered choristers hopping from spray to spray. In short, I see once again the world's great picture: not indeed, in its late lively colours, but more *delicately shaded*, and arrayed in *softer charms*.

What a *majestic scene* is here! Incomparably grand and exquisitely fine!—The moon, like an

immense crystal lamp, pendant in the magnificent ceiling of the heavens; the stars like so many thousands of golden tapers, fixed in their azure sockets —all pouring their lustre on spacious cities and lofty mountains, glittering on the ocean, beaming on the forest, and opening a prospect, wide as the eye can glance, more various than fancy can paint. We are forward to admire the performances of human art. A landscape, elegantly designed, and executed with a masterly hand; a piece of statuary which seems, amidst all the recommendations of exact proportion and graceful attitude, to soften into flesh, and almost breathe with life; these little *imitations* of nature we behold with a pleasing surprise. And shall we be less affected, less delighted, with the inexpressibly noble, and completely finished *original?* The ample dimensions of *Ranelagh's* dome, the gay illuminations of *Vauxhaul* grove, I should scorn to mention on such an occasion, were they not the objects of general admiration. Shall we be charmed with those puny essays of finite ingenuity, and touched with no transport at this stupenduous display of omnipotent skill? at the august grandeur and shining stateliness of the firmament, which forms an alcove for ten thousand worlds, and is ornamented with myriads of everlasting luminaries? Surely this must betray, not only a total *want of religion*, but the most abject littleness of mind, and the utmost *poverty of genius*.

The moon is not barely "an *ornament* in the high places of the Lord," but of signal *service* to the inhabitants of the earth. How uncomfortable is deep, pitchy, total darkness! especially in the long absence of the winter's sun. Welcome, therefore, thrice welcome, this auspicious gift of Providence, to enliven the nocturnal gloom, and line with

silver the raven-coloured mantle of night! How desirable to have our summer evenings illuminated! that we may be able to tread the dewy meads, and breathe the delicious fragrance of our gardens; especially when the sultry heats render it irksome and fatiguing to walk abroad by day! How cheering to the *shepherd* the use of this universal lantern, as he tends his fleecy charge, or late consigns them to their hurdled cots! How comfortable and how advantageous to the *mariner*, as he ploughs the midnight main, to adjust the tackling, to explore his way, and under the influence of this beaming sconce, to avoid the fatal rock! For these and other beneficial purposes the hand of the Almighty has hung the *stately branch* on high; and filled it with a splendour, not confined to a single edifice, or commensurate to a particular square, but diffusive as the whole extent of the hemisphere.

The most faithful of our inferior servants are sometimes tardy in their office, sometimes negligent of their duty; but this celestial attendent is most *exactly punctual* at all the stated periods of her ministration. If we choose to prolong our journey after the sun is gone down, the moon, during her whole *increase*, is always ready to act in the capacity of a guide. If we are inclined to set out very early in the morning, the moon, in her *decrease*, prevents the dawn, on purpose to offer her assistance; and because it is so pleasant a thing for the eyes to behold the light, the moon, at her *full*, by a course of unintermitted waiting, gives us as it were, a double day. How apparently has the Divine Wisdom interested itself, in providing even for the *pleasurable accommodation* of man! how desirous that he should want no piece of commodious furniture, no kind of delightful convenience; and

in prosecution of these benevolent intentions, has annexed so valuable an appendage to the terrestrial globe! Justly, therefore, does the Psalmist celebrate that admirable constitution, which ordained *the moon and the stars to govern the night*, as an instance of rich goodness *and of mercy which endureth for ever*.

The moon, it is confessed is *no luminous* body. All the brightness which beautifies her countenance is originally in the sun, and no more than transmissively in her. That glorious orb is the parent of day, and the palace of light. From thence the morning-star gilds her horn, from thence the planetary circles are crowned with lustre, and from thence the moon derives all her silver radiance. It is pleasing to reflect, that such is the case with the *all-sufficient Redeemer*, and his *dependent people*. We are replenished from his fulness. What do we possess which we have not received, and what can we desire which we may not expect, from that never-failing Source of all good? He is the author of our faith, and the former of our graces. In his unspotted life we see the path, in his meritorious death the price, and in his triumphant resurrection the proof, of bliss and immortality. If we offend, and fall seven times a day, he is the Lord our *Peace*. If we are depraved, and our best deeds very unworthy, he is the Lord our *Righteousness*. If we are blind, and even brutish in heavenly knowledge, he is the Lord our *Wisdom:* his word dispels the shades, his Spirit scatters the intellectual gloom, his eye looks our darkness into day. In short, we are nothing, and "Christ is all." Worse than defective in ourselves, "we are *complete* in him." So that if we shine, it is with delegated rays and with borrowed light. We act by a strength, and

glory in merits, not our own. O! may we be thoroughly sensible of our dependence on the Saviour! May we constantly imbibe his propitious beams, and never, by indulging *unbelief*, or backsliding into *folly*, withdraw our souls from his benign influences; lest we lose our comfort and our holiness, as the fair ruler of the night loses her splendour, when her urn is turned from its fountain, and receives no more communications of solar effulgence.

The moon is incessantly *varying*, either in her aspect or her stages. Sometimes she looks full upon us, and her visage is all lustre; sometimes she appears in profile, and shows us only half her enlightened face; anon a radiant crescent but just adorns her brow; soon it dwindles into a slender streak, till at length all her beauty vanishes, and she becomes a beamless orb. Sometimes she rises with the *descending day*, and begins her procession amidst admiring multitudes; ere long she defers her progress till the *midnight watches*, and steals unobserved upon the sleeping world. Sometimes she just enters the edges of the western *horizon*, and drops us a ceremonious visit; within a while she sets out on her nightly tour, from the opposite regions of the east, traverses the whole *hemisphere*, and never offers to withdraw till the more refulgent partner of her sway renders her presence unnecessary. In a word, she is, while conversant among us, still waxing or waning, and "never continueth in one stay."

Such is the moon; and such are all *sublunary things*, exposed to perpetual vicissitudes. How often and how soon have the faint echoes of *renown* slept in silence, or been converted into the clamours of obloquy! The same lips, almost with the

same breath, cry Hosanna, and Crucify. Have not *riches* confessed their notorious treachery a thousand and a thousand times; either melting away like snow in our hands, by insensible degrees, or escaping, like a winged prisoner from its cage, with a precipitate flight? Have we not known the bridegroom's *closet* an antechamber to the *tomb;* and heard the voice, which so lately pronounced the sparkling pair, husband and wife, proclaim an everlasting divorce, and seal the decree with that solemn asseveration, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust?" Our *friends*, though the medicine of life; our *health* though the balm of nature; are a most precarious possession. How soon may the first become a corpse in our arms, and how easily is the last destroyed in its vigour; You have seen, no doubt, a set of pretty *painted birds* perching on your trees, or sporting in your meadows: you were pleased with the lovely visitants, that brought beauty on their wings, and melody in their throats. But could you ensure the *continuance* of this agreeable entertainment? No, truly. At the least disturbing noise, at the least terrifying appearance, they start from their seats, they mount the skies, and are gone in an instant, are gone for ever. Would you choose to have a happiness which bears date with their arrival, and expires at their departure? If you could not be content with a portion, enjoyable only through such a *fortuitous term*, not of years but of moments, O! take up with nothing earthly, set your affections on things above: there alone "is no variableness or shadow of turning."

Job is not a more illustrious pattern of patience, than an eminent exemplification of this remark. View him in his *private estate:* he heaps up silver as the dust, he washes his steps in butter, and the

rock pours him out rivers of oil. View him in his *public character:* princes revere his dignity, the aged listen to his wisdom, every eye beholds him with delight, every tongue loads him with blessings. View him in his *domestic circumstances:* on one hand he is defended by a troop of sons, on the other adorned with a train of daughters, and on all sides surrounded by "a very great household." Never was human felicity so consummate; never was *disastrous revolution* so sudden. The lightning which consumed his cattle was not more terrible, and scarce more instantaneous. The joyful parent is bereft of his offspring, and his "children are buried in death;" the man of affluence is stripped of his abundance, and he who was clothed in scarlet embraces the dunghill. The venerable patriarch is the derision of scoundrels; and the late darling of an indulgent Providence is become, "a brother to dragons, a companion of owls." Nor need we go back to former ages for proofs of this afflicting truth. In our times, in all times, the wheel continues the same incessant whirl; and frequently, those who are triumphing to-day in the highest *elevations* of joy, to-morrow are bemoaning the instability of mortal affairs in the very *depths* of misery. Amidst so much fluctuation and uncertainty, how wretched is the condition which has no anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast. May thy loving-kindness, O God, be our present treasure, and thy future glory our reversionary inheritance! Then shall our happiness not be like the full-orbed moon, which is "a light that *decreaseth* in its perfection," but like the sun when he goeth forth in his strength, and knoweth no other change but that of shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Methinks, in this ever-varying sphere I see a re-

presentation, not only of our temporal advantages, but also of our *spiritual accomplishments*. Such, I am sure, is what the kind partiality of a friend would call *my righteousness;* and such, I am apt to suspect, is the righteousness of every man living. Now we exercise it in some few instances, in some little degrees; anon sin revives, and leads our souls into a transient, though unwilling capacity. Now we are *meek;* but soon a ruffling accident intervenes, and turns our composure into a fretful disquietude. Now we are *humble;* soon we reflect upon some inconsiderable or imaginary superiority over others, and a sudden elatement swells our minds. Now perhaps, we possess a clean heart, and are warm with holy love; but O! how easily is the purity of our affections sullied; how soon the fervour of our gratitude cooled! And is there not something amiss, even in our best moments; something to be *ashamed* of in all we *are;* something to be *repented* of in all we *do?*

With what gladness, therefore, and adoring thankfulness, should we "submit to the righteousness of our incarnate God; and *receive*, as a divine gift, what cannot be *acquired* by human works! A writer of the first distinction and nicest discernment, styles the obedience of our glorious Surety, an *everlasting righteousness;* such as was subject to no interruption, nor obscured by the least blemish; but proceeded always in the same uniform tenor of the most spotless perfection. This righteousness, in another sense, answers the prophet's exalted description; as its beneficial and sovereign efficacy knows no end; but lasts through all our life, lasts in the trying hour of death, lasts at the decisive day of judgment, lasts through every generation, and will last to all eternity.

Sometimes I have seen that resplendent globe *stripped* of her *radiance;* or, according to the emphatical language of the Scriptures, "turned into blood." The earth, interposing with its opaque body, intercepted the solar rays, and cast its own gloomy shadow on the moon. The malignant influence gained upon her sickening orb; extinguished more and more the feeble remainders of light; till at length, like one in a *deep swoon*, no comeliness was left in her countenance; she was totally overspread with darkness. At this juncture, what a multitude of eyes were gazing upon the rueful spectacle! even of those eyes which disregarded the empress of the night or beheld her with indifference, when, robed in glory, and riding in her triumphal chariot, she shed a softer ray through the nations. But now, under these circumstances of disgrace, they watch her motions with the most prying attention. In every place, her misfortune is the object of general observation, and the prevailing topic of discourse in every company.

Is it not thus, with regard to *persons* of *eminence*, in their respective spheres? Kings, at the head of their subjects: nobles, surrounded with their dependents; and after names of so much grandeur may I be allowed to add, ministers labouring among their people; are each in a conspicuous station. Their conduct in its *minutest* step especially in any *miscarriage*, will be narrowly surveyed, and critically scanned. Can there be a louder call, to ponder the paths of their feet, and to be particularly jealous over all their ways? Those who move in inferior life, may grossly offend, and little alarm be given, perhaps no notice taken; but it is not to be expected, that the least slip in their carriage, the least flaw in their character, will pass undiscovered.

Malice, with her eagle-eyes, will be sure to discern them; while *censure*, with her shrill trumpet, will be as far from concealing them, as *calumny*, with her treacherous whispers, from extenuating them. A planet may sink below the horizon; or a star, for several months withdraw its shining; and scarce one in ten thousand perceive the loss; but if the moon suffers a transient eclipse, almost half the world are spectators of her dishonour.

Very different was the case, when at this late hour I have taken a solitary walk on the *western cliffs*. At the foot of the steep mountain, the sea, all clear and smooth, spread itself into an immense plain, and held a watery mirror to the skies. Infinite heights above, the firmament stretched its azure expanse; bespangled with unnumbered stars, and adorned with the moon, "walking in brightness." She seemed to contemplate herself with a peculiar pleasure, while the *transparent surface* both received and returned her *silver image*. Here, instead of being covered with sackloth, she shone with double lustre; or rather, with a lustre multiplied in proportion to the number of beholders, and their various situations.

Such, methinks, is the effect of an exemplary behaviour in persons of exalted rank. Their course, as it is nobly distinguished, so it will be happily *influential;* others will catch the diffusive ray, and be ambitious to resemble a pattern so attractive, so commanding. Their amiable qualities will not terminate in themselves, but we shall see them *reflected* from their families, their acquaintance, their retainers; just as we may now behold another moon, trembling in the stream, glittering in the canal, and displaying its lovely impress on every collection of waters.

The moon, philosophy says, is a sort of *sovereign* over the great deep: her orb, like a royal sceptre, sways the ocean, and actuates the fluid realms; it swells the tides, and perpetuates the reciprocal returns of ebb and flow; by which means, the liquid element purges off its filth, and is preserved from being putrefied itself, and from poisoning the world. Is the moon thus *operative* on the vast abyss; and shall not the faith of eternal and infinite delights to come, be equally efficacious on this soul of mine? Far above her argent fields are treasures of *happiness*, unseen by mortal eye, by mortal ear unheard, and unconceived by any human imagination. In that desirable world, the most distinguished and exalted *honours* also are conferred; in comparison with which, the thrones and diadems of earthly monarchs, are empty pageants and childish toys. Yonder arch of sapphire, with all its spangles of gold, is but the floor of those divine abodes. What then are the apartments; what is the palace? How bright with glories; how rich with bliss!

O! ye mansions of blessedness, ye beauties of my Father's kingdom, which far outshines these lamps of the visible heaven, transmit your sweet and winning invitations to my heart. *Attract* and *refine* all my affections; withdraw them from *stagnating* on the sordid shores of flesh; never suffer them to settle upon the impure lees of sense; but impress them with *emotions* of restless desires after sublime and celestial joys; joys, that will proceed, still proceed in a copious and everlasting flow, when seas shall cease to roll; joys, that will charm every faculty with unimaginable pleasure, when the moon, with her waxing splendours, shall cheer our sight no more.

Enough for the present evening. My thoughts have been sufficiently exercised, and my steps begin to be attended with weariness. Let me obey the admonition of nature, and give respite to my meditations, slumber to my eyes. But stay: shall I retire to the bed of sleep with as little ceremony, and with as much inattention, as the brutes to their sordid lair? Are no *acknowledgments* due to that Divine Being, who is the support of my life, and the length of my days? Have I no farther need of his *protecting* care, no more occasion for the blessings of his goodness? *Lepidus*, perhaps, may laugh at the bended knee: and have a thousand darts of raillery ready to discharge on the practice of devotion. The *wits*, I know, are unmercifully severe on what *they* call the drudgery of prayer, and the fantastical rant of praise. These they leave to the illiterate labourer and the mean mechanic; or treat them, with a contemptuous sneer, as the parson's ignoble trade.

Is it, then, an instance of *superstitious* blindness to distinguish, or of *whimsical* zeal to celebrate, the most supereminent excellency and merit? Is it an *ungraceful* business, or does it argue a *grovelling* disposition, to magnify goodness transcendently rich and diffusive? What can be so truly becoming a *dependant state*, as to pay our adoring homage to the Author of all perfection, and profess our devoted allegiance to the supreme Almighty Governor of the universe? Can any thing more significantly bespeak an *ingenious temper*, or administer a more real satisfaction to its finest feelings, than the exercises of penitential devotion; by which we give vent to an honest anguish, or melt into filial sorrow for our insensibility to the best of friends, for our disobedience to the best of parents? In a word, can

there be a more *sublime pleasure*, than to dwell, in fixed contemplation, on the beauties of the Eternal Mind; the amiable original of all that is fair, grand, and harmonious; the benificent giver of all that is convenient, comfortable, and useful? Can there be a more *advantageous employ*, than to present our requests to the Father of Mercies; opening our minds to the irradiations of his wisdom, and all the faculties of our souls to the communications of his grace?—It is strange, unaccountably strange, that the notion of *dignity* in sentiment, and the pursuit of *refined* enjoyment, should ever be disunited from devotion; that persons, who make pretensions to an improved taste and exalted genius, should neglect this most ennobling intercourse with the wisest and best of beings, the inexhaustible source of honour and joy.

Shall I be deterred from approaching this source of the purest delight? deterred from pursuing this highest improvement of my nature? deterred from all by a *formidable* banter, or confuted by one *irrefragable* smile? No; let the moon, in her resplendent sphere; and yonder pole, with all its starry train, witness, if I be silent even or morn; if I refrain to kindle in my heart, and breathe from my lips, the reasonable incense of praise; praise to the great and glorious God, who formed the earth, and built the skies; who poured from his hand the watery world, and shed the all-surrounding air abroad—"Thou also madest the night, Maker Omnipotent! and Thou, the day! which I, though less than the least of all thy mercies, have passed in safety, tranquility, and comfort. When I was lost in the extravagance of dreams, or lay immersed in the insensibility of sleep; thy hand recovered me from the temporary lethargy; thy hand set a new

a delicately fine edge, on all my blunted *senses*, and strung my sinews with recruited vigour. When my thoughts were benumbed and stupefied, thy quickening influence roused them into activity; when they were disconcerted and wild, thy regulating influence reduced them into order; refitting me at once to relish the innocent entertainments of an *animal*, and to enjoy the sublime gratifications of a *rational* capacity. When darkness covered the creation, at thy command the *sun* arose; painted the flowers, and distinguished every object; gave light to my feet, and gave nature, with all her beautiful scenes, to my eye. To Thee, O Thou God of my strength, I owe the *continuance* of my being, and the *vivacity* of my constitution. By thy sacred order, without any consciousness of mine, the wheels of life move, and the crimson fountain plays. *Overruled* by thy exquisite *skill*, it transforms itself, by the nicest operations of an inexplicable kind of chymistry, into a variety of the finest secretions, which glide into the muscles, and swell them for action; or pour themselves into the fluids, and repair their incessant decays; which cause cheerfulness to sparkle in the eye, and health to bloom in the cheek.

"*Disastrous accidents*, injurious to the peace of my mind, or fatal to the welfare of my body, beset my paths; but thy faithfulness and truth, like an impenetrable shield, guarded me all around. Under this divine protection, I walked secure admist legions of *apparent* perils; and passed unhurt through a far greater multiplicity of *unseen* evils. Not one of my bones was broken; not a single shaft grazed upon my case; even when the eye that watched over me, saw, in its wide survey, *thousands falling beside me* in irrevocable ruin, *and*

ten thousands deeply wounded *on my right hand.* If sickness has at any time saddened my chamber, or pain harrowed my flesh, it was a *wholesome* discipline, and a gracious severity: the chastisement proved, a sovereign medicine to cure me of an immoderate fondness for this imperfect troublesome state, and to quicken my desires after the unimbittered enjoyments of my eternal home. Has not thy munificence, unwearied and unbounded, spread my *table*, and furnished it with the finest wheat, replenished it with marrow and fatness; while temperance sweetened the bowl, appetite seasoned the dish, contentment and gratitude crowned the repast? Has not thy kindness, O God of the families of *Israel*, preserved my affectionate *relations*, who study, by their tender offices, to soften every care, and heighten every joy? Has not thy kindness given me valuable *friends*, whose presence is a cordial to cheer me in a dejected hour, and whose conversation mingles improvement with delight?

"When sin lay disguised amidst flowery scenes of pleasure; enlightened by thy wisdom, I *discerned* the latent mischief; made resolute by thy grace, I *shunned* the luscious bane. If, through the impulse of sensuality or the violence of passion, I have been hurried into the snare, and stung by the serpent; thy faithful admonitions have *recalled* the foolish wanderer, while the blood of thy Son has *healed* his deadly wounds. Some, no doubt, have been cut off in the midst of their iniquities; and transmitted, from the thrillings of polluted joy, to the agonies of eternal despair: whereas I have been distinguished by long-suffering mercy; and, instead of lifting up my eyes in torments, to behold a heaven irrecoverably lost, I may lift them up under the pleasing views of being admitted, ere long, into

those abodes of endless felicity. In the mean time thou hast vouchsafed me the *revelation* of thy will, the influences of thy *Spirit*, and abundance of the most effectual *aids* for advancing in knowledge and growing in godliness; for becoming more conformable to thy image, and more meet for thy presence; for tasting the pleasures of religion, and securing the riches of eternity.

"How various is thy beneficence, O thou Lover of souls! It has unsealed a thousand sources of good; opened a thousand avenues of delight; and heaped blessings upon me with a ceaseless liberality. If I should attempt to declare them, they would be more than the *starry* host which glitter in this unclouded sky; more than the *dewy* gems which will adorn the face of the morning.

"And shall I *forget* the God of my salvation, the author of all my mercies? Rather let my pulse forget to beat! Shall I render him *no* expressions of thankfulness? Then might all nature reproach my ingratitude. Shall I rest satisfied with the *bare* acknowledgment of my lips? No, let my life be vocal, and speak his praise, in that only genuine, that most emphatical language—the language of devout obedience. Let the *bill* be drawn upon my very heart; let all my affections *acknowledge* the draught; and let the whole tenor of my actions, in time and through eternity, be continually *paying* the debt, the ever-pleasing, ever-growing debt, of duty, veneration, and love.

"And can I, O thou Guide of my goings, and Guardian of all my interests, can I *distrust* such signal, such experienced goodness? *Thou hast been my helper* through all the busy scenes of day; *therefore under the shadow of thy wings* will I repose myself, during the darkness, the danger, and

death-like inactivity of the night. Whatever defilement I have contracted, wash it thoroughly away in redeeming blood; and let neither the sinful stain, nor the sinful inclination, accompany me to my couch! Then *shall I lay me down in peace, and take my rest;* cheerfully referring it to thy all-wise determination, whether I shall open my eyes in *this* world, or awake in the unknown regions of another."

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

STARRY HEAVENS.

There dwells a noble pathos in the skies,
Which warms our passions, proselytes our hearts.
How eloquently shines the glowing pole!
With what authority it gives its charge,
Remonstrating great truths in style sublime!

NIGHT THOUGHTS, No. IX.

CONTEMPLATIONS

ON THE

STARRY HEAVENS.

This evening I exchange the nice retreats of art for the noble theatre of nature. Instead of measuring my steps under the *covert* of an arbour, let me range along the *summit* of this gently rising hill. There is no need of the leafy shade, since the sun has quitted the horizon, and withdrawn his scorching beams. But see, how advantages and inconveniences are usually linked, and chequer our affairs below! If the *annoying heat* ceases, the *landscape* and its pleasing scenes are also removed. The majestic castle and the lowly cottage are vanished together. I have lost the aspiring mountain and its russet brow; I look round, but to no purpose, for the humble vale and its flowery lap. The plains whitened with flocks, and the heath yellow with furze, disappear. The advancing night has wrapped in darkness the long-extended forest; and drawn her mantle over the windings of the silver stream. I no longer behold that luxuriant fertility in the fields, that wild magnificence of prospect, and endless variety of images, which have so often touched me with delight, and struck me with awe from this commanding eminence.

The loss, however, is scarcely to be regretted, since it is amply compensated by the opening beauties of the sky. Here I enjoy a free view of the whole hemisphere without any obstacle from below, to confine the exploring eye; or any cloud from above, to overcast the spacious concave. Tis true, the lively vermilion, which so lately streaked the chambers of the west, is all faded; but the *planets*, one after another, light up their lamps; the *stars* advance in their glittering train; a thousand and a thousand luminaries shine forth in successive splendours, and the whole firmament is kindled into the most beautiful glow. The blueness of the æther, heightened by the season of the year, and still more enlivened by the *absence* of the *moon*, give those gems of heaven the strongest lustre.

One pleasure more the invading gloom has not been able to snatch from my sense; the night rather improves than destroys the fragrance which exhales from the *blooming beams;* with these the sides of this sloping declivity are lined; and with these the balmy zephyrs perfume their wings. Does *Arabia*, from all her spicy groves, breathe a more liberal or a more charming gale of sweets? And, what is a peculiar recommendation of the rural entertainments presented in our happy land, they are alloyed by no apprehensions of danger. No poisonous serpent lurks under the blossom; nor any ravenous beast lies ready to start from the thicket. —But I wander from a far more exalted subject. My thoughts, like my affections, are too easily diverted from the heavens, and detained by inferior objects. Away, my attention, from these little blandishments of the earth, since all the *glories* of the *sky* invite thy regard.

We have taken a turn among the *tombs*, and viewed the solemn memorials of the dead, in order to learn the vanity of mortal things, and to break their soft enchantment. We have surveyed the *ornaments* of the *garden;* not that the heart might be planted in the parterre, or take root among the flowery race; but that these delicacies of a day might teach us to aspire after a better paradise, where beauty never fades, and delight is ever in the bloom. A third time we lighted the candle of meditation, and sought for wisdom, not in the crowded city or wrangling schools, but in the silent and lonely *walks* of ancient *night*. Let us once more indulge the contemplative vein, and raise our speculations to those *sublimer works* of the great Creator, which the regions of the sky contain, and this dusky hour unveils.

If we have discerned the touches of his pencil, glowing in the colours of spring; if we have seen a sample of his benificence, exhibited in the stores of nature; and a ray of his brightness, beaming in the blaze of day; what an infinitely richer field for the display of his perfections are the heavens. The *heavens*, in the most emphatical manner, declare the glory of God. The heavens are nobly eloquent of the Deity, and the most magnificent heralds of their Maker's praise. They speak to the whole universe; for there is neither speech so *barbarous*, but their language is understood; nor nation so *distant*, but their voices are heard among them. Let me then, in this solemn season, formed for thought and a calm intercourse with heaven, let me listen to their silent lectures: perhaps I may receive such impressive manifestations of "the Eternal Power and Godhead," as may *shed* religion on my soul, while I walk the solitary shades;

and may be a tutelary *friend* to my *virtue*, when the call of business, and the return of light, expose me again to the inroads of temptation.

The *Israelites*, instigated by frenzy rather than devotion, worshipped the host of heaven; and the pretenders to *judical astrology* talk of, I know not what, mysterious efficacy in the different aspect of the stars, or the various conjunction and opposition of the planets. Let those who are unacquainted with the sure word of revelation, give ear to these sons of delusion and dealers in deceit: for my part, it is a question of indifference to me, whether the constellations shone with smiles, or lowered in frowns, on the hour of my nativity. Let Christ be my *guard*, and secure in such a protection, I would laugh at their impotent menaces. Let Christ be my *guide*, and I shall scorn to ask, as well as despair of receiving, any predictory information from such senseless masses. What! shall "the living seek to the dead?" Can these bodies advertise me of future events, which are unconscious of their own existence? Shall I have recourse to dull unintelligent matter, when I may apply to that all-wise Being, who, with one comprehensive glance, distinctly views whatever is lodged in the bosom of immensity, or forming in the womb of futurity? Never, never will I search for any intimations of my *fate*, but often trace my Creator's *footsteps* in yonder starry plains. In the former case, they would be teachers of lies; in the latter, they are oracles of truth. In this therefore, this sense only, I profess myself the pupil of the stars.

The vulgar are apprehensive of nothing more than a multitude of *bright spangles*, dropped over the æthereal blue. They have no higher notion of these fine appearances, than that they are so many

golden studs, with which the empyrean arch is decorated. But studious minds, that carry a more accurate and strict inquiry among the celestial bodies, bring back advices of a most astonishing import. Let me just recollect the most material of those *stupendous discoveries*, in order to furnish out proper subjects for contemplation. And let the unlearned remember, that the scene I am going to display, is the workmanship of that incomprehensible God, who is "perfect in knowledge, and mighty in power;" whose name, whose nature, and all whose operations, are "great and marvellous;" who summons into being, with equal ease, a single grain, or ten thousand worlds. To this if we continually advert, the assertions, though they will certainly excite our *admiration*, need not transcend our belief.

The earth is, in fact, a round body, however it may seem in some parts to be sunk into vales, and raised into hills; in other parts, to be spread into a spacious plain, extending to the confines of the heavens, or terminated by the waters of the ocean. We may fancy, that it has deep foundations, and rests upon some prodigiously solid basis. But it is *pendant* in the wide transpicuous æther, without any visible cause to uphold it from above, or support it from beneath. It may seem to be sedentary in its attitude, and motionless in its situation; but it is continually *sailing* through the depths of the sky, and in the space of twelve months finishes the mighty voyage: which periodical rotation produces the seasons, and completes the year. As it proceeds in the annual circuit it *spins* upon its own *centre*, and turns its sides alternately to the fountain of light: by which means, the *day* dawns in one hemisphere while the night succeeds in the other.

Without this expedient, one part of its regions would, during half the great revolution, be scorched with excessive heat, or languish under an unintermitted glare; while the other, exposed to the contrary extremes, would be frozen to ice, and buried under a long oppression of dismal and destructive darkness.

I cannot forbear taking notice, that in this compound motion of the earth, the one never *interferes* with the other, but both are perfectly *compatible*. Is it not thus with the precepts of religion, and the needful affairs of the present life, not excepting even the innocent gratifications of our appetites? Some, I believe, are apt to imagine, that they must renounce society if they devote themselves to Christ; and abandon all the satisfactions of *this* world, if they once become zealous candidates for the felicity of *another*. But this is a very mistaken notion, or else a very injurious representation, of the doctrine which is according to godliness. It was never intended to drive men into deserts, but to lead them through the peaceful and pleasant paths of wisdom, into the blissful regions of life eternal. It was never intended to strike off the wheels of business, or cut in sunder the sinews of industry; but rather to make men industrious from a principle of *conscience*, no tfrom the instigations of *avarice;* that so they may promote their immortal happiness, even while they provide for their temporal maintenance. It has no design to extirpate our passions, but only to restrain their irregularities; neither would it extinguish the delights of sense, but prevent them from evaporating into vanity, and subsiding into gall. A person may be cheerful among his friends, and yet joyful in God. He may taste the sweets of his earthly estate, and

at the same time cherish his hopes of a nobler inheritance in heaven. The *trader* may prosecute the demands of commerce, without neglecting to negotiate the affairs of his salvation. The *warrior* may wear his sword, may draw in a just cause that murderous weapon, yet be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and obtain the crown that fadeth not away. The *parent* may lay up a competent portion for his children, and not forfeit his title to the treasures either of grace or of glory. So far is Christianity from obstructing any valuable interest, or withholding any real pleasure, that it improves the one, and advances the other: just as the diurnal and annual motions are so far from *clashing*, that they entirely *accord;* and instead of being destructive of each other, by mutually blending their effects, they give proportion and harmony to time, fertility and innumerable benefits to nature.

To us, who dwell on its surface, the earth is by far the *most extensive* orb that our eyes can any where behold. It is also clothed with verdure, distinguished by trees, and adorned with a variety of beautiful decorations. Whereas to a spectator placed on one of the planets, it wears an uniform aspect, looks all luminous, and *no larger* than a spot; to beings who dwell at still greater distances, it entirely disappears. That which we call alternately, the morning and the evening star; as in one part of her orbit, she rides foremost in the procession of night; in the other, ushers in and anticipates the dawn; is a *planetary world;* which, with the four others, that so wonderfully vary their mystic dance, are in themselves dark bodies, and shine only by reflection: have fields, and seas, and skies of their own; are furnished with all accommodations for *animal* subsistence, and are supposed to be the

abodes of *intellectual* life: all which, together with this our earthly habitation, are dependent on that grand dispenser of divine munificence, the sun; receive their light from the distribution of his rays, and derive their comforts from his benign agency.

The *sun*, which seems to perform its daily stages through the sky, is, in this respect, *fixed* and immoveable. 'Tis the great axle of heaven, about which the globe we inhabit, and other more spacious orbs wheel their stated courses. The sun, though seemingly *smaller* than the *dial* it illuminates, is abundantly *larger* than the whole *earth;* on which so many lofty mountains rise, and such vast oceans roll. A line extending from side to side, through the centre of that resplendent orb, would measure more than eight hundred thousand miles; a girdle, formed to go round its circumference, would require a length of millions: were its solid contents to be estimated, the account would overwhelm our understanding, and be almost beyond the power of language to express. Are we startled at these reports of philosophy? Are we ready to cry out, in a transport of surprise: "How *mighty* is the Being who kindled such a prodigious fire, and keeps alive, from age to age, such an enormous mass of flame!" Let us attend our philosophic guides, and we shall be brought acquainted with speculations more enlarged, and more amazing.

This sun, with all its attendant planets, is but a very little part of the grand machine of the universe. Every *star*, though in appearance no bigger than the diamond that glitters upon a lady's ring, is really a *vast globe*, like the sun in size, and in glory: no less spacious, no less luminous than the radiant source of our day; so that every star is not barely a world, but the *centre* of a magnifi-

cent system; has a retinue of worlds, irradiated by its beams, and revolving round its attractive influence; all which are lost, to our sight, in unmeasurable wilds of æther. That the stars appear like so many diminutive and scarce distinguishable *points*, is owing to their immense and inconceivable distances. Immense and inconceivable indeed it is; since a ball, shot from the loaded cannon, and flying with unabated rapidity, must travel, at this impetuous rate, almost seven hundred thousand years, before it could reach the *nearest* of those twinkling luminaries.

Can any thing be more wonderful than these observations? Yes; there are truths far more stupendous; there are scenes far more extensive. As there is no end of the Almighty Maker's greatness, so no imagination can set limits to his creating hand. Could you soar beyond the moon, and pass through all the planetary choir; could you wing your way to the highest apparent star, and take your stand on one of those loftiest pinnacles of heaven; you would, there, see *other skies* expanded; *another sun*, distributing his inexhaustable beams by day; *other stars*, that gild the horrors of the alternate night; and *other*, perhaps nobler *systems* established; established, in unknown profusion, through the boundless dimensions of space. Nor does the dominion of the universal Sovereign terminate *there*. Even at the end of this vast tour, you would find yourself advanced no farther than the suburbs of creation; arrived only at the frontiers of the great Jehovah's kingdom.

And do they tell me that the sun, the moon, and all the planets, are but a little part of his works? *How great*, then, *are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders!* And if so, what is the Creator

himself? how far exalted above all praise! who is so *high*, that he looks down on the highest of these dazzling spheres, and sees even the summit of creation in a vale; so *great*, that this prodigious extent of space is but a point in his presence; and all this confluence of worlds as the lightest atom that fluctuates in air, and sports in the meridian ray.

Thou most sublime and incomprehensibly glorious God, how am I overwhelmed with awe; how sunk into the lowest prostration of mind; when I consider thy *excellent greatness*, and my own utter insignificancy! And have I, excessively mean as I am, have I entertained any *conceited apprehensions* of myself? Have I felt the least elatement of thought in the presence of so majectic and adorable a Being? How should this wound me with sorrow, and cover me with confusion! O my God, was I possessed of all the *high perfections* which accomplish and adorn the angels of light; amidst all these noble endowments, I would fall down in the *deepest abasement* at thy feet. Lost in the infinitely superior blaze of thy uncreated glories, I would confess myself to be nothing, to be less than nothing, and vanity. How much more ought I to maintain the most unfeigned humiliation before thy divine majesty, who am not only dust and ashes, but a compound of ignorance, imperfection, and depravity!

While beholding this vast expanse, I learn my own extreme meanness; I would also discover the abject littleness of all *terrestrial things*. What is the earth, with all her ostentatious scenes, compared with this astonishingly grand furniture of the skies? What, but a dim *speck*, hardly perceivable in the map of the universe? It is observed by a very judicious writer. that if the sun himself, which

enlightens this part of the creation, was extinguished, and all the host of planetary worlds which move about him were annihilated, they would not be missed by an eye that can take in the whole compass of nature, any more than a grain of sand upon the sea shore. The bulk of which they consist, and the space which they occupy, is so exceedingly little in comparison of the whole, that their loss would scarce leave a blank in the immensity of God's works. If, then not our globe only, but this whole system, be so very diminutive, what is a kingdom, or a country? what are a few *lordships*, or the so much admired *patrimonies* of those who are styled wealthy? When I measure them with my own little pittance, they swell into proud and bloated dimensions; but when I take the universe for my standard, how scanty is their size, how contemptible their figure! they shrink into *pompous nothings*.

When the keen-eyed eagle soars above all the feathered race, and leaves their very sight below; when she wings her way, with direct ascent, up the steep of heaven, and, steadily gazing on the meridian sun, accounts its beaming splendours all her own; does she then regard, with any solicitude, the *mote* that is flying in the air, or the *dust* which she shook from her feet? And shall this eternal mind, which is capable of contemplating its Creator's glory; which is intended to enjoy the visions of his countenance; shall this *eternal mind*, endued with such great capacities, and made for such exalted ends, be so *ignobly ambitious* as to sigh for the tinsels of state; or so *poorly covetous* as to grasp after ample territories on a needle's point? No; under the influence of such considerations I feel my sentiments expand, and my wishes acquire a turn of sublimity. My throbbing desires after

worldly grandeur die away; and I find myself, if not possessed of power, yet superior to its charms. Too long, must I own, have my affections been pinioned by vanity, and immured in this earthly clod. But these thoughts break the *shackles*. These objects open the door of *liberty*. My soul, fired by such noble prospects, weighs anchor from this little nook, and coasts no longer about its contracted shores, dotes no longer on its painted shells. The *immensity* of things is her range, and an *infinity* of bliss is her aim.

Behold this immense expanse, and admire the *condescension*, of thy God: In this manner, an inspired and princely astronomer improved his survey of the nocturnal heavens. *When I consider thy heavens, even the works of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained*, I am smitten with wonder at thy glory, and cry out, in a transport of gratitude, *Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man that thou visitest him?* "How amazing, how charming, is that divine benignity, which is pleased to bow down its sacred regards to so foolish and worthless a creature! yea, disdains not, from the height of infinite exaltation, to extend its kind providential care to our most minute concerns! This is amazing; but that the Everlasting Sovereign should give his Son, to be made flesh, and become our Saviour! Shall I call it a *miracle* of condescending goodness? rather, what are all miracles, what are all mysteries, to this ineffable gift?"

Had the *brightest archangel* been commissioned to come down with the olive-branch of peace in his hand, signifying his Eternal Maker's readiness to be reconciled; on our bended knees, with tears of joy, and a torrent of thankfulness, we ought to have

received the transporting news; but when, instead of such an angelic envoy, he sends his *only begotten Son*, his Son beyond all thought illustrious, to make us the gracious overture; sends him from the "habitation of his holiness and glory," to put on the *infirmities* of mortality, and dwell in a tabernacle of clay; sends him, not barely to make us a transient visit, but to abide *many years* in our inferior and miserable world; sends him, not to exercise dominion over monarchs, but to wear out his life in the ignoble form of a *servant;* and, at last, to make his exit under the infamous character of a *malefactor!* Was ever love like this? Did ever grace stoop so low? Should the sun be shorn of all his radiant honours, and degraded into a *clod* of the valleys; should all the dignitaries of heaven be deposed from their thrones, and degenerate into *insects* of a day; great, great would be the abasement; but *nothing* to thine, most blessed Jesus; *nothing* to thine, thou Prince of Peace; when, for us men and for our salvation, thou didst not abhor the coarse accommodations of the *manger;* thou didst not decline even the gloomy horrors of the *grave.*

'Tis well the sacred oracles have given this doctrine the most explicit confirmation, and evidence quite incontestable; otherwise, a favour so undeserved, so unexpected, and rich beyond all imagination, might stagger our belief. Could He, who launches all these planetary globes through the illimitable void, and leads them on, from age to age in their extensive career; could he resign his hands to be *confined* by the girding cord, and his back to be *ploughed* by the bloody scourge? Could He, who crowns all the stars with inextinguishable *brightness*, be himself defiled with *spitting*, and disfigured with the thorny scar? It is the greatest of wonders, and yet the surest of truths.

O! ye mighty orbs, that roll along the space of the sky; I wondered, a little while ago, at your vast dimensions, and ample circuits. But now my amazement ceases; or rather, is entirely swallowed up by a much more stupendous subject. Methinks, your enormous bulk is shrivelled to an *atom;* your prodigious revolutions are contracted to a *span;* while I muse upon the far more elevated heights and unfathomable depths, the infinitely more extended lengths and unlimited breadths, *of* this *love of God in Christ Jesus.*

Contemplating this stately expanse, I see a mirror, which represents, in the most awful colours, the *heinousness* of human *guilt.* Ten thousand volumes, wrote on purpose to display the aggravations of my various acts of disobedience, could not so effectually convince me of their inconceivable enormity, as the consideration of that *all-gracious Person,* who, to make an atonement for them, spilt the last drop of his blood. *I have sinned,* may every child of *Adam* say; *and what shall I do unto thee, O thou observer of men?* Shall I give my first-born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? Vain commutation! and such as would be rejected by the blessed God with the utmost abhorrence. Will all the *potentates,* that sway the sceptre in a thousand kingdoms, devote their royal and honoured lives to rescue an obnoxious creature from the stroke of vengeance? Alas! it must cost more, incomparably more, to expiate the malignity of sin, and save a guilty wretch from hell. Will all the *principalities* of *heaven* be content to assume my nature, and resign themselves to death for my pardon? Even this would be too mean a satisfaction for inexorable justice; too scanty a reparation of God's injured hon-

our. So flagrant is human guilt, that nothing but a victim of *infinite dignity* could constitute an adequate propitiation. *He* who said, "Let there be light, and there was light;" Let there be a firmament, and immediately the blue curtains floated in the sky; *he* must take flesh; he must feel the fierce torments of crucifixion, and pour out his soul in agonies, if ever such trangressors are pardoned.

How vast is that debt which all the wealth of both the *Indies* cannot discharge! How vitiated that habit of body, which all the drugs produced by nature herself cannot rectify! But how much more *ruined* was thy condition, O my soul! how much more *heinous* were thy crimes! since nothing less than the sufferings and death of Messiah, the son of God, and radiant image of his glory, could effect thy recovery, or cancel thy iniquity. Though perhaps, thou art not sunk so very deep in pollution as some of the most abandoned profligates, yet remember the inestimable ransom paid to redeem thee from everlasting destruction. Remember this, and "never open thy mouth any more," either to *murmur* at the divine chastisements, or to *glory* in thy own attainments. Remember this; and even "*loathe* thyself for the multitude of thy provocations," and thy great baseness.

Once more; let me view this beautiful, this magnificent expanse, and conceive some juster apprehensions of the unknown richness of my *Saviour's atonement*. I am informed by a writer who cannot mistake, that the High-Priest of my profession, who was also the sacrifice for my sins, *is higher than the heavens;* more exalted in dignity, more bright with glory, than all the heavenly mansions, and all their illustrious inhabitants. If my heart was humbled at the consideration of its excessive

guilt, how do all my drooping powers revive at this delightful thought? The poor criminal, that seemed to be *tottering* on the very brink of the infernal pit, is *raised*, by such a belief, even to the portals of paradise. My self-abasement, I trust, will always continue; but my fears, under the influence of such a conviction, are quite gone. I do not, I cannot, doubt the efficacy of this propitiation. *While I see a* glimpse of its matchless excellency, and *verily believe* myself interested in its merits, I know not what it is to feel any misgiving suspicions; but am steadfast in faith, and joyful through hope.

Be my iniquities like debts of millions of talents, here is more than full payment for all that prodigious sum. Let the enemy of mankind, and accuser of the brethren, load me with invectives; this one plea—*a divine Redeemer died*—most thoroughly quashes every indictment. For, though there be much turpitude, and manifold transgressions, "there is no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus."—Nay, were I chargeable with all the vilest deeds which have been committed in every age of the world, by every nation of men; even in this most deplorable case, I need not sink into despair. Even such guilt, though grievous beyond all expression, is not to be compared with that *abundance* of *grace* and righteousness which dwells in the incarnate Divinity. How great, how transcendently glorious are the *perfections* of the adored Jehovah! so great, so superlatively precious, is the *expiation* of the dying Jesus. 'Tis impossible for the human mind to *exalt* this atonement too highly; 'tis impossible for the humble penitent to *confide* in it too steadily. The Scriptures, the Scriptures of eternal truth have said it, (exult

my soul in the belief of it!) that the blood on which we rely is God's own *blood;* and therefore all-sufficient to expiate, omnipotent to save.

David, that egregious sinner, but more exemplary saint, seems to have been well acquainted with this comfortable truth. What else can be the import of that very remarkable but most devout declaration, *Thou shalt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*—"I have been guilty, I must confess, of the most complicated and shocking crimes; crimes, inflamed by every aggravating circumstance, with regard to myself, my neighbour, and my God: *myself*, who have been blessed above men, and the distinguished favourite of Providence; *my neighbour*, who, in the most dear and tender interests, has been irreparably injured; *my God*, who might justly expect the most grateful returns of duty, instead of such enormous violations of his law. Yet, all horrid and execrable as *my offence* is, it is nothing to the superabundant merit of that *great Redeemer*, who was promised from the foundation of the world; in whom all my fathers trusted; who is the hope of all the ends of the earth. Though my conscience be more loathsome with adulterous impurity than the *dunghill;* though treachery and murder have rendered it even black as the gloom of *hell;* yet, washed in the 'fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness,' I shall be, I say not pure only—this were a disparagement to the efficacy of my Saviour's death; but I shall be fair as the *lily*, and white as the *snow.* Nay, let me not derogate from the glorious object of my confidence; cleansed by this sovereign sanctifying stream, I shall be *fairer* than the full-blown lily, *whiter* than the new fallen snows."

Power, saith the scripture, *belongeth unto God.* And in what majestic lines is this attribute of Jehovah written throughout the whole volume of the creation? especially through those magnificent pages, unfolded in yonder starry regions; which are therefore styled, by the sweet and seraphic singer of *Israel*, "the firmament of his power;" because the grand *exploits* of *Omnipotence* are there displayed with the utmost pomp, and recorded in the most legible characters.

Who, that looks upward to the midnight sky, and with an eye of reason, beholds its rolling wonders; who can forbear inquiring, Of *what* were those mighty orbs *formed?* Amazing to relate! they were produced without materials; they sprang from emptiness itself: the stately fabric of universal nature emerged out of *nothing!* What *instruments* were used by the Supreme Architect, to fashion the parts with such exquisite niceness, and give so beautiful a polish to the whole? How was all connected into one finely-proportioned and nobly-finished structure? A *bare fiat* accomplished all. "Let them be," said God. He added no more; and immediately the marvellous edifice arose, adorned with every beauty, displaying innumerable perfections, and declaring, amidst enraptured seraphs, its great Creator's praise. "By the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the *breath* of his mouth." What forceful machinery *fixed* some of those ponderous globes on an immoveable basis? What irresistible impulse *bowled* others through the circuit of the heavens? What coercive energy *confined* their impetuous courses within limits astonishingly large, yet most minutely true? Nothing but his *sovereign will!* For all things were at first consti-

tuted, and all to this day abide, "according to his ordinance."

Without any toilsome assiduity, or laborious process, to raise, to touch, to *speak* such a multitude of immense bodies into being; to *launch* them through the spaces of the sky, as an arrow from the hand of a giant; to impress on such *unwieldly* masses a motion far outstripping the swiftness of the winged creation, and to *continue* them in the same rapid whirl for thousands and thousands of years.—What an amazing instance of infinite might is this! Can any thing be impossible to the Lord, the Lord God, the Creator and Controller of all the ends of the earth, all the regions of the universe? Rather, is not all that we count *difficult*, perfect ease to that glorious Being who only spake, and the world was made; who only gave command, and the stupendous axle was lodged fast, the lofty wheels moved complete? What a sure defence, O my soul, is this everlasting strength of thy God! Be this thy continual *refuge* in the article of danger; this thy never-failing *resource* in every time of need.

What cannot this uncontrollable power of the great Jehovah effect for his people? Be their miseries ever so galling, cannot this God relieve them? Be their wants ever so numerous, cannot this God supply them? Be their corruptions within ever so inveterate, or their temptations without ever so importunate, cannot this mighty, mighty God subdue the former, and fortify them against the latter? Should *trials*, with an incessant vehemence, sift thee as wheat; should *tribulation*, with a weight of woes, almost grind thee to powder; should *pleasure* with her bewitching smiles, solicit thee to delicious ruin; yet "hold thee fast by God," and

lay thy help upon him that is omnipotent. Thou canst not be involved in such calamitous circumstances, or exposed to such imminent peril; but thy God, whom thou servest, is able to deliver thee from the one, and to support thee under the other. To *support!* to *deliver!* Let me not dishonour the unlimited greatness of his power. He is able to exalt thee, from the deepest distress, to the most triumphant joy; and to make even a complication of evils work together for thy everlasting good. *He is able*, not only to accomplish what I have been speaking, *but to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.*

O! the *wretched condition* of the wicked, who have this Lord of all power for their enemy! O! the *desperate madness* of the ungodly, who provoke the Almighty to jealousy! Besotted creatures! are you able to contend with your Maker, and enter the lists against incensed Omnipotence? Can you *bear* the fierceness of his wrath, or sustain the vengeance of his lifted arm? At his presence, though awfully serene, the hills melt like wax, and "the mountains skip like frighted lambs." At the least intimation of his displeasure, the foundations of nature rock, and the "pillars of heaven tremble." How then can a withered leaf endure, when "his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire?" Or can any thing *screen* a guilty worm, when the great and terrible God shall *whet his glittering sword, and his hand take hold on* inexorable *judgment?* When *that hand*, which shoots the planets, masses of excessive bulk, with such surprising rapidity through the sky; *that hand*, which darts the comets to such unmeasurable distances, beyond the orbit of our remotest planet, beyond the pursuit of the strongest eye: when that

hand is stretched out to punish, can the munition of rocks, the intervention of seas, or even interposing worlds, divert the blow? Consider this, *Ambition*, and bow thy haughty crest. Consider this, *Disobedience*, and bend thy iron sinew. O! consider this, all ye that forget or affront the tremendous Jehovah. He can, by a single act of his will, lay the universe in utter ruin; and can he want power to bring *you*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to the dust of death, or to the flames of hell? He has, I say not, ten thousand lightnings to scorch you to ashes; ten thousand thunders to crush you into atoms; but, what is unspeakably more dreadful, he has an *army* of terrors, even in the *look* of his angry countenance. His very frown is worse than destruction.

I cannot dismiss the subject without admiring the *patience* of the blessed God; who, though so strong and powerful, yet, "is provoked every day." Surely, as is his majesty, so is his mercy; his pity altogether commensurate to his power. If I vilify but the name of an earthly monarch, I lose my liberty, and am confined to the dungeon. If I appear in arms, and draw the sword against my national sovereign, my life is forfeited, and my very blood will scarce atone for the crime. But thee I have dishonoured, O! thou King immortal and invisible! Against thee my breast has fomented *secret disaffection;* my behaviour has risen up in *open rebellion;* and yet I am spared, yet I am preserved. Instead of being banished from thy presence, I sit at thy table, and am fed from thy hand. Instead of pursuing me with *thunder-bolts* of vengeance, thy *favours* surround me on every side. That arm, that injured arm, which might justly fall, with irretrievable ruin, on a traitor's head, is

most graciously stretched out to caress him with the tenderest endearments, to cherish him with every instance of parental kindness. O! thou mightiest, thou Best of Beings, how am I pained at my very soul for such shameful and odious disingenuity! Let me always abominate myself as the basest of creatures, but *adore* that unwearied long-suffering of thine, which refuses to be irritated; *love* that unremitted goodness, which no acts of ingratitude could stop, or so much as check, in its gracious current. O! let this stubborn heart which duty could not bind, which threatnings could not awe, be the captive, the *willing captive*, of such triumphant beneficence.

I have often been struck with wonder at that Almighty skill, which *weighed* the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance; which *proportioned* the waters in the hollow of its hand, and *adjusted* the dust of the earth by a measure. But how much more marvellous is that magnificent economy which *poised* the stars with inexpressible nicety, and *meted* out the heavens with a span! where all is prodigiously vast, immensely various, and yet more than mathematically exact. Surely the *wisdom* of God manifests itself in the skies, and shines in those lucid orbs; shines on the contemplative mind, with a lustre incomparably brighter than that which their united splendours transmit to the eye.

Behold yonder countless multitude of globes; consider their amazing magnitude; regard them as the sovereigns of so many systems, each accompanied with his planetary equipage. Upon this supposition, what a multiplicity of mighty spheres must be perpetually running their rounds in the upper regions: yet none mistake their way, or *wander* from the goal, though they pass through trackless

and unbounded fields. None *fly off* from their orbits into extravagant excursions; none *press in* upon their centre with too near an approach. None *interfere* with each other in their perennial passage, or *intercept* the kindly communications of another's influence; but all their rotations procceed in eternal harmony, keeping such time, and observing such laws, as are most exquisitely adapted to the perfection of the whole.

While I contemplate this "excellent wisdom which made the heavens," and attunes all their motions, how am I abashed at that mixture of arrogance and folly, which has at any time inclined me to *murmur* at thy *dispensations*, O Lord! What is this, but a sort of implicit treason against thy supremacy, and a tacit denial of thy infinite understanding? Hast thou so regularly placed such a wonderful diversity of systems through the spaces of the universe? Didst thou, without any probationary essays, without any improving re-touches, speak them into the most consummate perfection? Dost thou continually superintend all their circumstances with a sagacity that never mistakes the minutest tittle of propriety? And shall I be so unaccountably stupid as to question the *justness* of thy *discernment*, in "choosing my inheritance, and fixing the bounds of my habitation? Not a single erratum in modelling the structure, determining the distance, and conducting the career of *unnumbered* worlds! And shall my peevish humour presume to censure thy interposition with regard to the affairs of *one* inconsiderable creature, whose stature, in such a comparative view, is less than a span, and his present duration little more than a moment?

O! thou God, "in whose hand my breath is, and whose are all my ways," let such sentiments as

now possess my thoughts, be always lively on my heart! These shall compose my mind into a *cheerful* acquiescence, and a *thankful* submission, even when afflictions gall the sense, or disappointments break my schemes. Then shall I, like the grateful patriarch, in all the changes of my condition, and even in the depths of distress, erect an *altar* of adoring resignation, and inscribe it with the apostle's *motto*, "To God *only* wise." Then shouldst thou give me leave to be the carver of my own fortunes, I would humbly desire to relinquish the grant, and recommit the disposal of myself to thy unerring beneficence; fully persuaded that *thy counsels*, though contrary to my froward inclinations, or even afflictive to my flesh, are incomparably more eligible than the blind impulse of my own will, however soothing to animal nature.

On a careless inspection, you perceive no accuracy or uniformity in the position of the heavenly bodies. They appear like an *illustrious chaos*, a promiscuous heap of shining globes; neither ranked in order, nor moving by line. But what *seems* confusion *is* all regularity; what carries a show of negligence, is really the result of the most masterly contrivance. You think, perhaps, they rove in their aerial flight; but they rove by the nicest rule and without the least error. Their circuits, though seemingly devious; their mazes, though intricate to our apprehensions; are marked out, not indeed with golden compasses, but by the infinitely more exact determinations of the all-wise Spirit.

So, what wears the *appearance* of calamity in the allotments appointed for the godly, has really the *nature* of a blessing. It issues from a fatherly love, and will terminate in the richest good. If *Joseph* is snatched from the embraces of an indul-

gent parent, and abandoned to slavery in a foreign land; it is in order to save the holy family from perishing by famine, and to preserve "the seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed." If he falls into the deepest disgrace, it is on purpose that he may rise to the highest honours. Even the confinement of the prison, by the unsearchable workings of Providence, opens his way to the right hand of the throne itself. Let the most afflicted servant of Jesus wait the final upshot of things. He will *then* discover the apparent expediency of all those tribulations, which *now*, perhaps, he can hardly admit without reluctance, or suffer without some struggles of dissatisfaction. Then the gushing tear and the heaving sigh will be turned into tides of gratitude and hymns of holy wonder.

In the mean time, let no audacious railer presumptuously impeach the divine procedure; but, adoring where we cannot comprehend, let us expect the *evolution*, of the mysterious plan. Then shall every eye perceive that the seeming labyrinths of Providence were the most *direct* and *compendious* way to effect his general purposes of grace, and to bring about each one's particular happiness. Then, also, shall it be clearly shown, in the presence of applauding worlds, why virtue pined in want, while vice rioted in affluence; why amiable innocence so often dragged the dungeon *chain*, while horrid guilt trailed the *robe* of state. That day of universal audit, that day of everlasting retribution, will not only *vindicate* but *magnify* the whole management of heaven. The august sessions shall close with this unanimous, this glorious acknowledgment: "Though *clouds and darkness*, impenetrable by any human scrutiny, *were* sometimes *round about* the Supreme Conductor of things; yet *righ-*

teoueness and judgment were the constant *habitation of his seat*, the invariable standard of all his admin istrations." Thus (if I may illustrate the grandest truths by inferior occurrences) while we view the arras on the side of *least distinction*, it is void of any elegant fancy, without any nice strokes of art, nothing but a confused jumble of incoherent threads. No sooner is the piece beheld in its *proper aspect*, but the suspected rudeness vanishes, and the most curious arrangement takes place. We are charmed with the designs of the finest taste, and figures of the most graceful form: all is shaped with symmetry, all is clad in beauty.

The *goodness* of God is most eminently displayed in the skies. Could we take an understanding survey of whatever is formed by the Divine Architect, throughout the whole extent of *material* things, our minds would be transported with their excellencies, and our tongues echo back that great encomium, They are "good, very good:" most *beautiful* in themselves; contrived by unerring wisdom, and executed with inimitable skill: most *useful* in their functions; exactly fitting the places they fill, and completely answering the purposes for which they were intended! All the parts of the inanimate creation proclaim, both by their intrinsic and relative excellencies, the all-diffusive beneficence of their Maker.

How much more wonderful are the displays of divine indulgence in the worlds of life! Because dead matter is incapable of delight, therefore the gracious Creator has raised innumerable ranks of *perceptive existence;* such as are qualified to taste his bounty, and enjoy each a happiness suited to its peculiar state. With this view, he furnished the regions of inferior nature with an order and a series

of sensitive beings. The *waters* teem with shoals of finny inhabitants; the *dry land* swarms with animals of every order: the dwellings of the *firmament* are occupied by multitudes of winged people: not so much as a *green leaf*, philosophers say, but lodges and accommodates its puny animalcule tenants. And wherefore this diversity, this profusion of living creatures, flying the air, treading the ground, and gliding through the paths of the sea? For this most glorious reason—that the eternal Sovereign may exercise his superabundant goodness; that his *table* may be furnished with millions and millions of *guests;* that he may fill every hour, every moment, their mouths with food, or their hearts with gladness.

But what a small theatre are three or four *elements* for the operations of Jehovah's bounty! His magnificent liberality scorns such scanty limits. If you ask, wherefore has he created *all worlds*, and replenished them with an unknown multiplicity of beings, rising one above another in an endless gradation of still richer endowments and still nobler capacities? The answer is,—for the manifestation of his own glory, and especially for the *communication* of his inexhaustible beneficence. The great Creator could propose no advantage to himself; his bliss is incapable of any addition. "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made," he was supremely happy in his own independent and all-sufficient self. His grand design, therefore, in erecting so many stately fabrics, and peopling them with so many tribes of inhabitants, was to *transfuse* his exuberant kindness, and *impart* felicity in all its forms. Ten thousand worlds, stocked with ten thousand times ten thousand ranks of sensitive and intelligent exis-

tence, are so many spacious gardens, which, with rivers of communicated joy, this everflowing fountain, waters continually.

Boundless, and (which raises our idea of this divine principle to the very highest degree of perfection) disinterested munificence! How *inexpressibly amiable* is the blessed God, considered in this charming light! Is it possible to conceive any excellence so adorable and lovely, as infinite benevolence, guided by unerring wisdom, and exerting almighty power, on purpose to make a whole universe happy! O my soul, what an *irresistable attractive* is here! What a most worthy object for thy most fervent affection! Shall now every glittering toy become a rival to this transcendently beneficent Being, and rob him of thy heart? No: Let his all-creating arm teach thee to trust in the fulness of his sufficiency; let his all-superintending eye incline thee to acquiesce in the dispensations of his providence; and let his bounty, so freely vouchsafed, so amply diffused, induce thee to love him with all the ardour of a grateful and admiring soul; induce thee to *serve* him, not with a joyless awe, or slavish dread, but with unfeigned alacrity, and a delightful complacency.

If the goodness of God is so admirably seen in the works of nature, and the favours of providence; with what a noble superiority does it *even triumph* in the *mystery* of *redemption!* Redemption is the brightest mirror, in which to contemplate this most lovely attribute of the Deity. Other gifts are only as *mites* from the divine treasury; but redemption opens, I had almost said exhausts, all the *stores* of indulgence and grace. Herein "God *commendeth* his love:" not only manifests, but sets it off, as it were, with every bright and grand embellishment;

manifests it in so stupendous a manner, that it is beyond parallel, beyond thought, "above all blessing and praise." Was he not thy *Son*, everlasting God, thy *only* Son; the Son of thy bosom from eternal ages; the highest object of thy complacential delight? Was not thy love to this adorable Son incomparably greater than the tenderest affection of *any*, or the united affections of *all* mortal parents? Was not the blessed Jesus more illustrious in excellency than all angels; more exalted in dignity than all heavens? Yet didst thou resign him for poor mortals; for vile sinners! Couldst thou see him descend from his royal *throne*, and take up his abode in the sordid *stable?* See him forego the homage of the seraphim, and stand exposed to the reproachful *indignities* of an insolent rabble? See him arraigned at the bar, and sentenced to death; numbered with malefactors, and nailed to the gibbet; bathed in his own innocent blood, and pouring out his soul in agonies of sorrow? Could the Father, the Father *himself*, with unknown philanthrophy, say, "It shall, it shall be so! My pity to rebellious man pleads, and prevails. Awake, therefore, O *sword*, edged with divine wrath. Awake, and be sheathed in that *immaculate* breast; pierce that *dearly beloved* heart. I am content, that my Son endure the sharpness of death, rather than sinful mortals perish for ever." Incomprehensible love! May it henceforward be the favourite subject of my *meditation;* more delightful to my musing mind, than applause to the ambitious ear! May it be the darling theme of my *discourse;* sweeter to my tongue than the droppings of the honey-comb to my taste! May it be my choisest *comfort* through all the changes

of life; and my reviving *cordial*, even in the last extremities of dissolution itself.

A *prophet*, contemplating with a distant survey this unexampled instance of Almighty love, is wrapt into a *transport* of *devotion*. At a loss for proper acknowledgments, he calls upon the whole universe to aid his labouring breast, and supply his lack of praise. *Sing melodiously ye* vaulted *heavens; exult, and even leap for gladness, thou* cumbrous *earth; ye mountains*, break your long silence, and *burst into peals of loudest acclamation; for the* Lord, by this precious gift, and this great salvation, *hath comforted his people.* A *sacred historian* hath left it upon record, that, at the first exhibition of this ravishing scene, there was with the angel, who brought the blessed tidings, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and making the concave of the skies resound with their hallelujahs. At the dawn of the Sun of Righteousness, when he was beginning to rise with healing in his wings, the *morning stars* sang together, and all the *sons of God* shouted for joy. And shall *man* whom this gracious dispensation principally respects; shall *man* who is the centre of all these gladdening rays; shall he have no heart to adore, no anthem to celebrate, this

> Love without end, and without measure grace?
>
> MILTON.

How *pure* is the state of the sky, and how *clear* its aspect! clearer than the limpid stream; purer than the transparent crystal; and more curiously fine than the polished mirror. That *stately ceiling*, fretted with gold, and stretched to an extent of many millions of leagues, is not disfigured with

a single flaw. That azure canopy, embroidered with stars, and spacious enough to form a covering for unnumbered worlds, is without the least spot or wrinkle. Yet this, even this, will scarce yield us so much as a faint representation of the *divine purity*. God is a God of matchless and transcendent excellency; his ways are uprightness itself; his counsels and words are the very sanctity of wisdom, and of truth. *The laws* which he has given to universal nature, are exquisitely contrived, and beyond all posibility of improvement. The *precepts* which he has appointed for the human race, are a complete summary of all that is honourable in itself, and perfective of the rational mind. Not the least *oversight*, in planning a series of events for all futurity; not the least mal-administration in managing the affairs of every age since time began, and of every nation under the whole heavens. Pardon these disparaging expressions. A *negative* perfection is far, far beneath thy dignity, *O thou Most Highest*. In all these instances, in all thy acts, and all thy attributes, thou art not only holy, but *glorious* in *holiness*.

So inconceivably holy is the Lord God of Hosts, that he sees *defilement* even in the *brightness* of the firmament; the living sapphire of the heavens, before his majesty, loses its lustre; *yea, the stars* (though the most pure and resplendent part of the heavens) *are not pure in his sight. How much less man, who*, in his fallen and depraved state, *is* but as a *worm* that crawls in the corrupted carcass; *and the son of man, who*, by reason of his manifold actual impurities, *is* too justly compared to an *insect*, that wallows amidst stench and putrefaction? Is there not then abundant cause for the most irreproachable and eminent of mankind to renounce all

arrogant pretensions, to lay aside every assuming air, to take nothing but *shame* and confusion to themselves? A holy prophet, and a holy prince, felt such humbling impressions, from a glimpse of the uncreated purity. *I abhor myself in dust and ashes*, was the declaration of the one; *I am a man of unclean lips*, the confession of the other. Should not this teach us all to adore the divine mercies, for that precious *purifying fountain*, which was foretold from the foundation of the world, but was opened at that awful juncture, when knotty whips tore the flesh, when ragged thorns mangled the temples, when sharpened nails cut fresh sluices for the crimson current, when the gash of the spear completed the dreadful work, and *forthwith flowed there*, from the wounded heart, *blood and water!*

Especially, since God himself saw no blemish in his *dear Son. He looketh to the moon, and it shineth not;* yet his all-penetrating and jealous eye, discerned nothing amiss, nothing defective in our glorious Redeemer. Nothing amiss? He bore this most illustrious testimony concerning his holy child Jesus: "In him I am *pleased;* I am *well pleased;* I acquiesce, with entire complacency and with the highest delight, in his person, his undertaking, and the whole execution of his office." How should this thought enliven our hopes, while the other mortifies our pride! Should not our hearts spring within us, and even leap for joy, at the repeated assurance given us by revelation, that such a divinely excellent person is our Mediator? What apparent reason has every believer to adopt the blessed Virgin's exclamation! "*My soul doth magnify the Lord* for his transcendent mercy; *and my spirit rejoices*, not in wide-extended harvests, waving over my fertile glebe, not in armies van-

quished, and leaving the peculiar treasure of nations for my spoil, but in an infinitely richer, nobler blessing, even *in God my Saviour:*" that a person so sublime and perfect has vouchsafed to become my *surety;* to give himself for my *ransom*, in the world below, and act as my *advocate* in the royal presence above; yea, to make *my* recovery the reward of his sufferings; *my* final felicity the honour of his mediatorial kingdom!

When an innumerable multitude of bodies, many of them more than a *hundred thousand miles* in diameter, are all set in motion; when the orbits, in which they perform their periodical revolutions, are extended at the rate of several hundreds of *millions;* when each has a distinct and separate sphere for finishing his vast circuit; when no one knows what it is to be cramped, but each most *freely expatiates* in his unbounded career; when every one is placed at such an *immense remove* from each other, that they appear to their respective inhabitants only as so many spots of light; how astonishing must be the expanse, which yields *room* for all those mighty globes, and their widely diffused operations! To what prodigious lengths did the Almighty Builder stretch his line, when he marked out the stupendous platform! I wonder at such an immeasurable extent; my very thoughts are lost in this abyss of space; but be it known to mortals, be it never forgot by sinners, that, in all its most surprising amplitude, it is *small*, it is *scanty* compared with the bounty and the mercy of its Maker.

His *bounty* is absolutely without limits, and without end. The most lavish generosity cannot exhaust or even diminish his munificence. O! all ye tribes of men; or rather, all ye classes of intelli-

gent creatures; ye are not straitened in the *liberality* of your ever-blessed Creator; be not straitened in your own *expectations*. "Open your mouth wide, and he shall fill it," with copious and continual draughts from the cup of joy. Your God, on whom is your whole dependance, is more than able, is more than willing, to "supply all your need according to his riches in glory." When the Lord Jehovah is the giver, and his grace the gift, let your wishes be unbounded, and your cravings insatiable. All that created beings can possibly *covet*, is but a very small pittance of that unknown happiness, which the everlasting Benefactor is ready to *bestow*. Suppose every charitable disposition which warms the hearts of the human race added to those more enlarged affections which glow in heavenly bosoms; what were they all, even in their highest exercise, compared with the benignity of the Divine Nature? Bless *me*, then thou Eternal Source of love; bless *all* that reverence thy holy name, according to thy own most profuse goodness; whose great prerogative it is, to disdain all measure. O! bless us, in proportion to that grace, the richness of which (unutterable by the tongues of men, and of angels) was once *spoken* in the groans, and *written* in the wounds, of thy expiring Son!

Spacious indeed are these heavens! Where do they begin? Where do they end? What is their extent? Can angels answer my question? Have angels travelled the vast circuit? Can angels measure the bounds of space? No; 'tis boundless, 'tis unknown, 'tis amazing all. How charming, then, to reflect, that the mercy of God is "greater than the heavens;" is more extensive than the dimensions of the sky. Transporting reflection! Let me indulge thee once more. Let me think

over the delightful displays of this lovely attribute; and while I admire the *trophies* of forgiving goodness, add one to the number. With what amiable and affecting colours is this represented in the *parable* of the *prodigal!* What could induce that foolish youth to forsake his father's house? Had he not been tenderly cherished by the good parent, and loaded with benefits from his indulgent hand? Were not the restraints of parental government an easy yoke; or rather, a *preservative* from *ruin?* Notwithstanding every endearing obligation, he revolts from his duty, and launches into such scandalous irregularities, as were dishonourable to his family, and destructive to himself. When necessity, not choice, but sharp necessity, drove him to a submissive return; does the injured father stand aloof, or shut his doors? Quite the reverse: He espies him while he is yet a great way off, and the moment he beholds the profligate youth, he has compassion on him; his bowels yearn; they "sound like an harp," touched with notes divinely soft. He never once thinks of his ungracious departure and infamous debaucheries. Pity, parental pity, passes an act of oblivion; and in one instant, cancels a series of long-continued provocations. So strong are the workings of fatherly affection, that he is almost impatient to embrace the naked and destitute wretch. The son's pace is slow, *he arose and came;* the father's is swift, he sprang forth (aged as he was) and *ran.* And is there a single frown in his brow, or one upbraiding word on his tongue? Instead of loathing the sordid creature, or reproaching him for his odious excesses, he falls on his neck, clasps him in his arms, and hugs him to his bosom. Instead of disowning the riotous spendthrift, or rejecting him for his undutiful behaviour,

he receives and welcomes him with kisses of delight; he rejoices at his return from extravagance and vice, as he formerly rejoiced on the day of his nativity. When this companion of harlots opens his mouth, "before he speaks, the father hears." He interrupts him in the midst of his intended speech; the overflowings of his compassionate heart can brook no delay; he seems to be uneasy himself, till he has made the afflicted penitent glad with the assurance of his acceptance, and the choicest of his favours; while the poor abashed offender seeks nothing more than not to be abhorred, he is thoroughly reconciled, and honoured before the whole family; while he requests no other indulgence than only to be treated as the meanest servant, he is clothed with the best robe, he is feasted with the fatted calf, he is caressed as the dearest of children. Was there ever so bright and winning a picture of the tenderest mercy, most freely vouchsafed, even to the most unworthy of creatures? Yet thus, my soul; and thus, my fellow-sinner; will the Lord God of everlasting compassions receive us; if, sensible of our misery, and thirsting for salvation, we turn to him through Jesus Christ.

"Where sin has abounded," says the proclamation from the court of heaven, "grace doth much more abound." Manasseh was a monster of barbarity, for he caused his own children to pass through the fire, and filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Manasseh was an adept in iniquity; for he not only multiplied, and to an extravagant degree, his own sacreligious impieties, but he poisoned the principles, and perverted the manners, of his subjects *making them to do worse than the* most detestable of the *heathen* idolaters. Yet, through this superabundant grace, he is humbled, he is reformed, and

becomes a child of forgiving love, and an heir of immortal glory. Behold that bitter and bloody persecutor *Saul*; when breathing out threatening, and bent upon slaughter, he worried the lambs, and put to death the disciples of Jesus. Who, upon the principles of human jugdment, would not have pronounced *him* a vessel of wrath, destined to unavoidable damnation; nay, would not have been ready to conclude, that, if there were heavier chains and a deeper dungeon in the world of wo, they must surely be reserved for such an implacable enemy of true godliness? Yet, admire and adore the inexhaustible treasures of grace! this *Saul* is admitted into the goodly fellowship of the prophets, is numbered with the noble army of martyrs, and makes a distinguished figure among the glorious company of the apostles. The *Corinthians* were flagitous even to a proverb. Some of them wallowed in such abominable vices, and habituated themselves to such outrageous acts of injustice, as were a reproach to human nature. Yet, even these sons of violence, and slaves of sensuality, "were washed, were sanctified, were justified:" *washed*, in the precious blood of a dying Redeemer; *sanctified*, by the powerful operations of his blessed Spirit; justified, through the infinitely tender mercies of a gracious God. Those who were once the burden of the earth, are now the joy of heaven, and the delight of angels.

There is another instance in scripture, which most loudly publishes that sweetest of the divine names, "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin:" an instance this, which exceeds all the former; which

exceeds whatever can be imagined; which if I was to forget, the very stones might cry out, and sound it in my ears. I mean the case of those sinners who murdered the Prince of Peace, and Lord of Glory. These men could scarce have the shadow of an excuse for their crime; hardly a circumstance to extenuate their guilt. They were well acquainted with his exemplary conversation; they had often heard his heavenly doctrines; they were almost daily spectators of his unequalled miracles. They therefore had all possible reason to honour him, as the most illustrious of Beings; and to receive his Gospel, as the most inestimable of blessings. Yet, notwithstanding all these engaging motives to love him, even above their own lives; they seize his person, asperse his character, drag him before a heathen tribunal, and extort a sentence of death against innocence and holiness itself. Never was the vilest slave so contumeliously abused, nor the most execrable malefactor so barbarously executed. The sun was confounded at the shocking scene; and one cannot but wonder, how the avenging lightnings could withhold their flashes. The earth trembled at the horrid deed; and why, why did it not cleave asunder, and open a passage for such blood-thirsty miscreants into the nethermost hell? Shall these ever hope to obtain forgiveness from the righteous Judge? Shall not these be consigned to inexorable wrath, and the severest torments? O the miraculous effects of divine grace! O the triumphant goodness of God our Saviour! Many, even of these impious wretches, at the descent of the Holy Ghost, were convinced of their miserable state; were wounded with penitential remorse: fled to the sanctuary of the cross; had their pardon ratified by the baptismal seal; and, continuing in

the apostle's doctrine, were made partakers of the kingdom of heaven; where they now shine, as so many everlasting monuments of most distinguished mercy; and receive beatitude past utterance, from that very Redeemer, whom once "with wicked hands, they crucified and slew."

Well might the prophet cry out, with a pleasing amazement; "who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by trangression?" Let all flesh know assuredly; let all flesh rejoice greatly; that with the Lord there is *such mercy*, and with his Christ *such plentiful redemption*. And O! for the voice of an archangel, to circulate the glad tidings through the universe; that the American savage, as well as the European sage, may learn the exceeding riches of grace in Christ; through whose infinitely satisfying propitiation, all manner of sin, barbarity, and blasphemy, are freely forgiven unto men.

What a grand and majestic dome is the sky? Where are the pillars which support the stately concave? What art, most exactly true, balances the pressure? What props, of insuperable strength sustain the weight? How is that immeasurable arch upheld, unshaken, and unimpaired; while so many generations, of busy mortals, have sunk and disappeared, as bubbles upon the stream? If those stars are of such an amazing bulk, how are they also fastened in their lofty situation? By what miracle in mechanics are so many thousands of ponderous orbs kept from falling upon our heads; kept from dashing, both the world to pieces, and its inhabitants to death? Are they hung in golden or adamantine chains? Rest they their enormous load on rocks of marble, or columns of brass? No; they are pendulous in fluid æther; yet, are more

immoveably fixed, than if the everlasting mountains lent their forests for an axletree, or their ridges for a basis. The Almighty architect *stretches out the north*, and its whole starry train, *over the empty place*. He *hangs the earth*, and all the æthereal globes, upon nothing; yet are their foundations laid so sure, that they can "never be moved at any time."

No unfit representation, to the sincere Christian, of his final perseverance; such as points out the cause which effects it, and constitutes the pledge which ascertains it. His nature is all enfeebled. He is not able, of himself, to think a good thought. He has no visible safeguard, nor any sufficiency of his own; and yet whole legions of formidable enemies are in a confederacy to compass his ruin. The world lays unnumbered snares for his feet; the *devil* is incessantly urging the seige, by a multitude of fiery darts, or wily temptations; the *flesh*, like a perfidious inmate, under colour of friendship, and a specious pretence of pleasure, is always forward to betray his integrity. But amidst all these threatening circumstances of personal weakness, and imminent danger, an invisible aid is his defence. *I will uphold thee*, says the blessed God, *with the right hand of my righteousness*. Comfortable truth! The arm, which fixes the stars in their order, and guides the planets in their course, is stretched out to preserve the heirs of salvation. *My sheep*, adds the great Redeemer, *are mine; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand*. What words are these! And did they come from him who hath all power in heaven and on earth? And were they spoke to the weakest of the flock; to every unfeigned follower of the great Shepherd? Then, Omnipo-

tence itself must be vanquished, before they can be destroyed, either by the seductions of fraud, or the assaults of violence.

If you ask, therefore, what security we have, of enduring to the end, and continuing faithful unto death? The very same that establishes the heavens, and settles the ordinances of the universe. Can these be thrown into confusion? Then may the true believer draw back into perdition. Can the sun be dislodged from his sphere, and rush lawlessly through the sky? Then, and then only can the faith of God's elect be finally overthrown. Be of good courage then, my soul; rely on those divine succours, which are so solemnly stipulated, so faithfully promised. Though thy grace be languid as the glimmering spark; though the overflowings of corruption threaten it with total extinction; yet, since the great Jehovah has undertaken to cherish the dim principle, "many waters cannot quench it, nor all floods drown it." Nay, though it were feeble as the smoking flax, goodness and faithfulness stand engaged to augment the heat, to raise the fire, and feed the flame, till it beam forth a lamp of immortal glory in the heavens.

As to the faithfulness of a covenanting God, this may be emblematically seen in the stability of the heavenly bodies, and the perpetuity of their motions. Those that are fixed or stationary continue unalterable in their grand elevations. No injurious shocks, no violence of conflicting elements, are able to displace those everlasting hinges, on which dependent worlds revolve. Through the whole flight of time, they recede not so much as a hair's breadth from the precise central point of their respective systems; while the erratic, or planetary, perform their prodigious stages without any inter-

mission, or the least embarrassment. How soon, and how easily is the most finished piece of human machinery disconcerted! But all the celestial movements are so nicely adjusted, all their operations so critically proportioned, and their mutual dependencies so strongly connected, that they prolong their beneficial courses throughout all ages; while mighty cities are overwhelmed with ruin, and their very names lost in oblivion: while vast empires are swept from their foundations, and leave not so much as a shadowy trace of their ancient magnificence: while all terrestrial things are subject to vicissitude and fluctuating in uncertainty, these are permanent in their duration; these are invariable in their functions; "not one faileth." Who doubts the constant succession of day and night, or the regular returns of summer and winter? And why, O! why shall we doubt the veracity of God, or distrust the accomplishment of his holy word? Can the ordinances of heaven depart? then only can God forget to be gracious, or neglect the performance of his promise. Nay, our Lord gives us yet a firmer ground of affiance. He affords us a surer bottom for our faith than the *fundamental laws* of the universe. "Heaven and earth" he says, "shall pass away; but my words shall not," in a single instance, or in one tittle of their import, "pass away." No; his sacred word, whatever may obstruct it, whoever may oppose it, shall be fulfilled to the very uttermost.

O powerful word! how astonishing is its efficacy! When this word was issued forth, a thousand worlds emerged out of nothing. Should the mighty orders be repeated, a thousand more would spring into existence. By this word, the vast system of created things, is upheld in constant and immutable

perfection. Should it give command, or cease to exert its energy, the universal frame would be dissolved, and all nature revert to her original chaos. And this very word is pledged for the safety, the comfort, the happiness of the godly. This inviolable, this almighty word, speaks in all the promises of the Gospel. How strangely infatuated are our souls, that we should value it so little! What infidels are we in fact, that we should depend upon it no more! Did it create whatever has a being, and shall it not work faith in our breasts? Do unnumbered worlds owe their support to this word, and shall it not be sufficient to buoy up our souls in troubles, or establish them in trials? Is it the life of the universe, and shall it be a dead letter to mankind?

If I wish to be heard, when I implore heavenly blessings, is not this privilege most clearly made over to my enjoyment in that well-known text, "Ask, and it shall be given you?" If I long for the Eternal Comforter to dwell in my heart, and sanctify my nature, have I not an apparent title to this high prerogative conferred in that sweet assertive interrogation, "How much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask him? If I earnestly covet the inestimable treasures that are comprised in the great Immanuel's mediation, can I have a firmer claim to the noble portion than is granted in that most precious Scripture, "Him that cometh to me I will in no-wise cast out?" What assurance of being interested in these unspeakable mercies would I desire? What form of conveyance, what deed of settlement, were it left to my own option, should I choose? Here is the word of a King, the King immortal and invisible, all whose declarations are truth itself. If a

monarch bestow immunities on a body of men, and confirm them by an authentic charter, no one controverts, no one questions their right to the royal favours. And why should we suspect the validity of those glorious grants, which are made by the everlasting Sovereign of nature, which he has also ratified by an oath, and sealed with the blood of his Son? Corporations may be disfranchised, and charters revoked. Even mountains may be removed, and stars drop from their spheres: but a tenure, founded on the divine promise, is unalienably secure, is lasting as eternity itself.

We have endeavoured to spell a syllable of the eternal name in the ancient manuscript of the sky. We have catched a glimpse of the Almighty's glory from the lustre of innumerable stars. But would we behold all his excellencies portrayed in *full* perfection, and drawn to the very life, let us attentively consider the Redeemer. I observe there are some parts of the firmament in which the stars seem, as it were to cluster; they are sown thicker, they lie closer than usual, and strike the eye with redoubled splendour; like the jewels on a crown, they mingle their beams, and reflect an increase of brilliancy on each other. Is there not such an assemblage, such a constellation of the divine honours, most amiably effulgent in the blessed Jesus?

Does not infinite wisdom shine with surpassing brightness in Christ? To the making of a world there was no obstacle; but to the saving of man, there seemed to be unsurmountable bars. If the rebel is suffered to escape, where is the inflexible justice which denounces "death as the wages of sin?" If the offender is thoroughly pardoned, where is the inviolable veracity which has solemnly declared, "The soul that sinneth shall die!" These

awful attributes are set in terrible array, and, like an impenetrable battalion, oppose the salvation of apostate mankind. Who can suggest a method to absolve the traitorous race, yet vindicate the honours of Almighty Sovereignty? This is an intricacy, which the most exalted of finite intelligences are unable to clear. But behold the unsearchable secret revealed! revealed in the wonderful redemption, accomplished by a dying Saviour! so plainly revealed, that "he who runs may read," and even babes understand, what minds of the deepest penetration could not contrive. The Son of God, taking our nature, obeys the law, and undergoes death in our stead: by this means the threatened curse is executed in all its rigour, and free grace is exercised in all its riches. Justice maintains her rights, and, with a steady hand, administers impartial vengeance; while Mercy dispenses her pardons, and welcomes the repentant criminal into the tenderest embraces. Hereby the seemingly thwarting attributes are reconciled. The sinner is saved, not only in full consistence with the honour of the supreme perfections, but to the most illustrious manifestation of them all.

Where does the divine power so signally exert itself as in the cross of Christ, and in the conquests of grace? Our Lord, in his lowest state of humiliation, gained a more glorious victory, than when, through the dividing sea and the waste howling-wilderness, "he rode upon his chariots and horses of salvation." When his hands were rivetted with irons to the bloody tree, he disarmed death of its sting, and plucked the prey from the jaws of hell. Then, even then, while he was crucified in weakness, he vanquished the strong man, and subdued our most formidable enemies: even then he spoiled

principalities, triumphed over the powers of darkness, and led captivity captive. Now he is exalted to his heavenly throne, with what a prevailing efficacy does his grace go forth, "conquering and to conquer!" By this, the slaves of sin are rescued from their bondage, and restored to the liberty of righteousness. By this, depraved wretches, whose appetites were sensual, and their dispositions devilish, are not only renewed, but renewed after the image of God, and made partakers of a divine nature. Millions, millions of lost creatures are snatched, by the interposition of grace, like brands from the burning, and translated into everlasting mansions, shine brighter than the *stars*, shine bright as the *sun*, in the kingdom of their Father.

Would you then see an incomparably more bright display of the divine excellence than the unspotted firmament, the spangles of heaven, or the golden fountain of day exhibit? Contemplate Jesus of Nazareth. He is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. In his immaculate nature, in his heavenly tempers, in his most holy life, the moral perfections of the Deity, are represented to the highest advantage. Hark, how *Mercy*, with her charming voice, speaks in all he utters! See, how *Benevolence* pours her choicest stores in all he does! Did ever Compassion look so amiably soft as in those pitying tears, which swelled his eye, and trickled down his cheeks, to bedew the rancour of his inveterate enemies? Was it possible for *Patience* to assume a form so lovely as that sweetly-winning conduct, which bore the contradiction of sinners? which entreated the obstinate to be reconciled? besought the guilty not to die? In other things we may find some scattered rays of Jehovah's glory; but in Christ they are all

collected and united. In Christ they beam forth with the strongest radiance, with the most delightful effulgence. *Out of Zion*, and in *Zion's* great Redeemer, *hath God appeared in perfect beauty.*

Search then, my soul, above all other pursuits, search the records of redeeming love. Let these be the principal objects of thy study: here employ thyself with the most unwearied assiduity: *in these are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge:* such wisdom as charms and astonishes the very angels, engages their closest attention, and fills them with the deepest adoration: such knowledge, as qualifies the possessor, if not for offices of dignity on earth, yet for the most honourable advancements in the kingdom of heaven; disunited from which knowledge, all application is but elaborate impertinence, and all science no better than pompous ignorance. These records contain the faultless model of duty, and the noblest motives to obedience. Nothing so powerful, to work a lively faith and a joyful hope, as an attentive consideration of our Lord's unutterable merits: nothing so sovereign, to antidote the pestilential influence of the world, and deliver our affections from a slavery to ignoble objects, as an habitual remembrance of his extreme agonies. The genuine, the ever-fruitful source of all morality, is the unfeigned love of Christ; and the cross, the cross, is the appointed altar, from which we may fetch a coal to kindle this sacred fire.

Behold, therefore, *the man*, the matchless and stupendous man, whose practice was a pattern of the most exalted virtue, and his person the mirror of every divine perfection. Examine the memoirs of his heavenly temper and exemplary conversation: contemplate that choir of graces, which were associated in his mind, and shed the highest lustre on

all his actions; familiarize to thy thoughts his instructive discourses, and enter into the very spirit of his refined doctrines; that the graces may be transfused into thy breast, and the doctrines transcribed in thy life. Follow him to Calvary's horrid eminence, to Calvary's fatal catastrophe; where innocence, dignity, and merit, were *made perfect through sufferings;* each shining with all possible splendour through the tragical scene, somewhat like his own radiant bow, then glowing with the greatest beauty, when appearing on the darkest cloud. Be thy most constant attention fixed on that lovely and sorrowful spectacle. Behold the spotless victim nailed to the tree, and stabbed to the heart: hear him pouring out prayers for his murderers, before he poured out his soul for transgressors: see the wounds that stream with forgiveness, and bleed balm for a distempered world. O! see the justice of the Almighty, and his goodness; his mercy, and his vengeance; every *tremendous* and gracious attribute manifested; manifested with inexpressible glory, in that most ignominious, yet grandest of transactions.

Since God is so inconceivably great, as these his marvellous works declare;

> Since the great Sovereign sends ten thousand worlds
> To tell us, he resides above them all,
> In glory's unapproachable recess,

how can we forbear hastening, with Moses, bowing ourselves to the earth, and worshipping?

O! what an honourable, as well as advantageous employ, is prayer!—*Advantageous:* By prayer, we cultivate that improving correspondence with Jehovah, we carry on that gladdening intercourse

with his Spirit, which must begin here, in order to be completed in eternity.—*Honourable:* By prayer we have access to that mighty Potentate, whose sceptre sways universal nature, and whose rich regalia fill the skies with lustre. Prayer places us in his presence-chamber; while "the blood of sprinkling" procures us a gracious audience.

Shall I then blush to be found prostrate before the throne of grace? Shall I be ashamed to have it known, that I offer up social supplications in the family, or am conscientious in observing my private retirements? Rather let me glory in this unspeakable privilege: let me reckon it the noblest posture, to fall low on my knees before his footstool: and the highest honour, to enjoy communion with his most exalted majesty: incomparably more noble, than to sit in person on the triumphal chariot, or to stand in effigy amidst the temple of worthies.

Most inestimable, in such a view, is that promise, which so often occurs in the prophetic writings, and is the crowning benefit of the new covenant, *I will be thy God.* Will this supremely excellent and Almighty Being vouchsafe to be my portion? To settle upon a poor sinner, not the heritage of a country, not the possession of the whole earth, but his own ever-blessed self? May I, then, through his free condescending grace, and the unknown merits of his Son, look upon all these infinitely noble attributes as my treasure? May I regard the wisdom, which superintends such a multitude of worlds, as my guide; the power which produced, and preserves them in existence, as my guard; the goodness, which, by an endless communication of favours, renders them all so many habitations of happiness, as *my exceeding great reward?* What a fund of felicity is included in such a blessing!

How often does the *Israelitish* prince exult in the assurance, that this unutterable and boundless good is his own! Interested in this, he bids defiance to every evil that can be dreaded; and rests in certain expectation of every blessing that can be desired. *The Lord is my light, and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord*, with an air of exultation he repeats both his affiance, and his challenge, *is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?* Nothing so effectual as this appropriating faith, to inspire a dignity of mind, superior to transitory trifles, or to create a calmness of temper, unalarmed by vulgar fears, unappalled by death itself. *The Lord is my shepherd*, says the same truly gallant and heroic personage; *therefore shall I lack nothing.* How is it possible he should suffer want, who has the all-sufficient fulness for his supply? So long as unerring wisdom is capable of contriving the means; so long as uncontrollable power is able to execute them; such a one cannot fail of being safe and happy, whether he continue amidst the vicissitudes of time, or depart into the unchangeable eternity.

Here let us stand a moment, and humbly contemplate this great God, together with ourselves, in a relative view. If we reflect on the works of *material* nature, their number incomprehensible, and their extent unmeasurable; each of them apart so admirably framed; the connexions of the whole so exquisitely regulated; and all derived from one and the same glorious agent—if we recollect the far more noble accomplishments of elegant taste and discerning judgment, of refined affections and exalted sentiments, which are to be found among the several orders of *intelligent* existence; and all of them flowing, in rich emanations, from the one

sole fountain of intellectual light—if we farther consider this author of material beauty and moral excellency as a guardian, a governor and benefactor to all his creatures, supporting the whole system, and protecting each individual, by an ever-watchful Providence; presiding over the minutest affairs, and causing all events to terminate in the most extensive good; heaping, with unremitted liberality, his benefits upon every capable object, and making the circuit of the universe a seminary of happiness—is it possible for the human heart, under such captivating views, to be indifferent towards this most benign, most beautiful Original of being, and of bliss. Can any be so immersed in stupidity, as to say unto the Almighty—in the language of an irreligious temper and licentious life, to say, "Depart from us; we implore not thy favour, nor desire the knowledge of thy ways?" Wonder, O heavens! be amazed, O earth! and let the inhabitants of both, express their astonishment at this unparalleled complication of disingenuous, ungrateful, destructive perverseness!

If we consider our fallen and imperfect state, frail in our bodies, enfeebled in our minds, in every part of our constitution, and in all the occurrences of life, "like a tottering wall, or a broken hedge," —if we survey our indigent and infirm state, without holiness, without spiritual strength; our possession of present conveniences entirely dependent on God's sovereign pleasure; yea, forfeited, justly forfeited, with every future hope, by a thousand aggravated iniquities—if we add the various disasters of our condition; agitated as we are by tumultuous passions, oppressed with dispiriting fears, held in suspense by a variety of perplexing cares; liable to pains, and exposed to troubles;

troubles from every quarter; troubles of every kind—Can we amidst so many wants, under such deplorable infirmities, and subject to such disastrous accidents—can we be unconcerned, whether God's omnipotent, irresistable, all-conducting hand, be against us or for us? Imagination itself shudders at the thought! Can we rest satisfied, without a well-grounded persuasion that we are reconciled to this supreme Lord, and are the objects of his unchangeable goodness? If there be an abandoned wretch, whose apprehensions are so fatally blinded; who is so utterly lost to all sense of his duty, and of his interest; let me bewail his misery, while I abhor his impiety: bewail his misery, though popularity, with her choicest laurels, adorn his brow; though affluence, with her richest delicacies, load his table; though half a nation, or half a world, conspire to call him happy.

May I, by a believing application, solace myself in this everlasting Source of love, perfection and joy! Grant me this request, and I ask no more: —Only, that I may expect, not with a reluctant anxiety, but with a ready cheerfulness, the arrival of that important hour, when this veil of flesh shall drop, and the shadows of mortality flee away; when I shall no longer complain of obscure knowledge, languid affections, and imperfect fruition—but shall see the uncreated and immortal Majesty: see him, not in this distant and unaffecting method of reasoning from his works, but with the most clear and direct intuition of the mind—when I shall love him, not with a cold and contracted spirit, but with the most lively and enlarged emotions of gratitude—when I shall incessantly enjoy the light of his countenance; and be united, inseparably united, to his all-glorious God-head. Take, ye ambitious, unen-

vied and unopposed, take to yourselves the toys of state. May I be enabled to rejoice in this blessed hope, and to triumph in that amiable, that adorable, that delightful name, the Lord my God! and I shall scarce bestow a thought on the splendid pageantry of the world, unless it be to despise its empty pomp, and to pity its deluded admirers.

All these bodies, though immense in their size, and almost infinite in their multitude, are obedient to the divine command. The God of wisdom "telleth their numbers," and is intimately acquainted with their various properties. The God of power "calleth them all by their names," and assigns them whatsoever office he pleases.—He marshals all the starry legions with infinitely greater ease, and nicer order, than the most expert general arranges his disciplined troops.—He appoints their posts; he marks their route; he fixes the time for their return. The posts which he appoints, they occupy without fail; in the route which he settles, they persevere without the least deviation; and to the instant which he fixes for their return, they are precisely punctual.—He has given them a law, which, through a long revolution of ages, shall not be broken, unless his sovereign will interposes for its repeal. Then, indeed, the motion of the celestial orbs is controlled; their action remains suspended; or their influence receives a new direction. The sun, at his creation, issued forthwith, by a command to travel perpetually through the heavens; since which he has never neglected to perform the great circuit, rejoicing as a giant to "run his race." But, when it is requisite to accomplish the purposes of divine love, the orders are countermanded; the flaming courier remits his career; *stands still in Gibeon;* and for the conveniency of the chosen people, holds back

the fallen day. The moon was despatched with a charge, never to intermit her revolving course till day and night come to an end. But when the children of Providence are to be favoured with an uncommon continuance of light, she halts in her march; makes a solemn pause, *in the valley of Ajalon;* and delays to bring on her attendant train of shadows.—"When the enemies of the Lord are to be discomfitted, the stars are levied into the service; the stars are armed, and take the field; *the stars, in their courses, fought against Sisera.*"

So dutiful is material nature! so obsequious in all her forms, to her Creator's pleasure! The bellowing thunders listen to his voice; and the vollied lightnings observe the direction of his eye. The flying storm and impetuous whirlwind wear his yoke. The raging waves revere his nod: they shake the earth; they dash the skies; yet never offer to pass the limits which he has prescribed. Even the planetary spheres, though vastly larger than this wide-extended earth, are, in his hand, as clay in the hands of the potter. Though, swifter than the northern blast, they sweep the long tracts of æther, yet are they guided by his reins, and execute whatever he enjoins. All those enormous globes of central fire which beam through the boundless azure, in comparison of which an army of planets were like a swarm of summer insects; those, even those, are conformable to his will, as the melting wax to the impressed seal. Since all, all is obedient throughout the whole ascent of things, shall man be the only rebel against the Almighty Maker? Shall these unruly appetites reject his government, and refuse their allegiance? Shall these headstrong passions break loose from divine restraint, and run wild, in exhorbitant sallies, after their own imaginations?

O my soul, be stung with remorse, and overwhelmed with confusion, at the thought! Is it not a righteous thing, that the blessed God should sway the sceptre, with the most absolute authority, over all the creatures which his power has formed? especially over those creatures, whom his distinguishing favour has endued with the noble principle of reason, and made capable of a blissful immortality? Sure, if all the ranks of inanimate existence conform to their Maker's decree by the necessity of their nature, this more excellent race of beings should pay their equal homage by the willing compliance of their affections. Come then, all ye faculties of my mind; come, all ye powers of my body; give up yourselves, without a moment's delay, without the least reserve, to his governance. Stand, like dutiful servants, at his footstool, in an everlasting readiness to do whatsoever he requires, to be whatsoever he appoints; to further, with united efforts, the purposes of his glory in this earthly scene; or else to separate, without reluctance at his summons: the *one*, to sleep in the silent dust; the *other*, to advance his honour in some remoter colony of his kingdom. Thus may I join with all the works of the Lord, in all places of his dominion, to recognize his universal supremacy; and proclaim him Sovereign of Souls, as well as Ruler of Worlds.

At my first coming abroad, all these luminaries were eclipsed by the overpowering lustre of the sun: they were all placed in the very same stations, and played the same sprightly beams; yet not one of them was seen. As the day-light wore away, and the sober shades advanced, *Hesperus*, who leads the starry train, disclosed his radiant forehead, and catched my eye. While I stood gazing on his bright and beautiful aspect, several of his attendants peep-

ed through the blue curtains. Scarce had I turned to observe these fresh emanations of splendour, but others dropped the veil, others stole into view. When lo! faster and more numerous multitudes sprang from obscurity; they poured in shining troops, and in sweet confusion, over all the empyrean plain; till the firmament seemed like one vast constellation, and "a flood of glory burst from all the skies."

Is not such the rise, and such the progress of a true conversion, in the prejudiced infidel, or inattentive sinner? During the period of his vainer years, a thousand interesting truths lay utterly undiscovered; a thousand momentous concerns were entirely disregarded; but when divine grace dissipates the delusive glitter which dazzled his understanding and beguiled his affections, then he begins to discern, dimly to discern, the things which belong unto his peace. Some admonition of Scripture darts conviction into his soul, as the glimmering of a star pierces the gloom of night: then, perhaps, another awful or cheering text impresses terror or diffuses comfort: a threatening alarms his fears, or a promise awakens his hopes. This, possibly, is succeeded by some afflictive dispensation of Providence, and improved by some edifying and instructive conversation; all which is established, as to its continuance, and enlarged, as to its influence, by a diligent study of the sacred word. By this means, new truths continually pour their evidence; scenes of refined and exalted, but hitherto unknown delight, addresses him with their attractives; new desires take wing; new pursuits are set on foot; a new turn of mind forms his temper; a new habit of conversation regulates his life. In a word, *old things are passed away, and all things*

are become new: he, who was sometimes darkness, is now light, and life, and joy in the Lord.

The more attentively I view the crystal concave, the more fully I discern the richness of its decorations. Abundance of minuter lights, which lay concealed from a superficial notice, are visible on a closer examination; especially in those tracts of the sky which are called the *Galaxy*, and are distinguishable by a sort of milky path. There the stars are crowded, rather than disseminated; the region seems to be all on a blaze with their blended rays. Besides this vast profusion, which in my present situation the eye discovers, was I to make my survey from any other part of the globe, lying nearer the southern pole, I should behold a new choir of starry bodies, which have never appeared within our horizon. Was I (which is still more wonderful,) either here or there, to view the firmament with the virtuoso's glass, I should find a prodigious multitude of flaming orbs, which, immersed in depths of æther, escape the keenest unassisted sight. Yet, in these various situations, even with the aid of the telescopic tube, I should not be able to descry the half, perhaps not a thousandth part, of those majestic luminaries, which the vast expansive heavens contain. So, the more diligently I pursue my search into those oracles of eternal truth, the Scriptures, I perceive a wider, a deeper, an ever-increasing fund of spiritual treasures. I perceive the brighter strokes of wisdom, and the richer displays of goodness; a more transcendant excellency in the illustrious Messiah, and a more deplorable vileness in fallen man; a more immaculate purity in God's law, and more precious privileges in his Gospel. Yet, after a course of study ever so assiduous, ever so prolonged, I should have

reason to own myself a mere babe in heavenly knowledge; or, at most, but a *puerile* proficient in the school of Christ.

After all my most accurate inspection, those starry orbs appear but as glittering points. Even the planets, though so much nearer our earthly mansions, seem only like burning bullets. If, then, we have such imperfect apprehensions of visible and material things, how much more scanty and inadequate must be our notions of invisible and immortal objects! We behold the stars: though every one is incomparably bigger than the globe we inhabit, yet they dwindle, upon our survey, into the most diminutive forms. Thus, we see by faith the glories of the blessed Jesus; the atoning efficacy of his death; the justifying merit of his righteousness; and the joys which are reserved for his followers. But alas! even our most exalted ideas are vastly below the truth: as much below the truth, as the report which our eyes make of those celestial edifices, as inferior to their real grandeur. Should we take in all the magnifying assistances which art has contrived, those luminous bodies would elude our skill, and appear as small as ever. Should an inhabitant of earth travel towards the cope of heaven, and be carried forwards, in his ærial journey, more than a hundred and sixty millions of miles; even in that advanced situation, those oceans of flame would look no larger than radiant specks. In like manner, conceive ever so magnificently of the Redeemer's honours, and of the bliss which he has purchased for his people; yet you will fall short. Raise your imagination higher; stretch your invention wider; give them all the scope which a soaring and excursive fancy can take; still your conceptions will be extremely

disproportionate to their genuine perfections.—Vast are the bodies which roll in the expanse of heaven; vaster far are those fields of æther, through which they run their endless round: but the excellency of Jesus, and the happiness laid up for his servants, are greater than *either;* than *both;* than *all.* An inspired writer calls the former "The unsearchable riches of Christ;" and styles the latter "An exceeding great and eternal weight of glory."

If those stars are so many inexhaustible magazines of fire, and immense reservoirs of light, there is no reason to doubt but they have some very grand uses, suitable to the magnificence of their nature. To specify, or explain, the particular purposes they answer, is altogether impossible in our present state of distance and ignorance: this, however, we may clearly discern; they are disposed in that very manner which is most pleasing and most serviceable to mankind. They are not placed at an *infinite remove*, so as to lie beyond our sight; neither are they brought *so near* our abode, as to annoy us with their beams. We see them shine on every side; the deep azure, which serves them as a ground, heightens their splendour: at the same time their influence is gentle, and their rays are destitute of heat: so that we are surrounded with a multitude of fiery globes, which beautify and illuminate the firmament, without any risk either to the coolness of our night, or the quiet of our repose. Who can sufficiently admire that wondrous benignity, which on our account, strews the earth with blessings of every kind, and vouchsafes to make the very heavens subservient to our delight?

It is not solely to adorn the roof of our palace with costly gildings, that God commands the celestial luminaries to glitter through the gloom: we also

reap considerable benefits from their ministry.—They divide our time, and fix its solemn periods. They settle the order of our works, and are, according to the destinations mentioned in sacred writ, "for signs and for seasons; for days and for years." The returns of heat and cold alone would have been too precarious a rule. But these radiant bodies, by the variation, and also by the regularity of their motions, afford a method of calculating, absolutely certain, and sufficiently obvious. By this, the farmer is instructed when to commit his grain to the furrows, and how to conduct the operations of husbandry. By this, the sailor knows when to proceed on his voyage with least peril, and how to carry on the business of navigation with most success.

Why should not the Christian, the probationer for eternity, learn from the same monitors, to number —for nobler purposes, to number his days; and duly to transact the grand, grand affairs of his everlasting salvation? Since God has appointed so many bright measurers of our time, to determine its larger periods, and to minute down its ordinary stages; sure, this most strongly inculcates its value, and should powerfully prompt us to improve it. Behold! the supreme Lord marks the progress of our life in that most conspicuous calendar above. Does not such an ordination tell us, and in the most emphatical language, that our life is given for use, not for waste? that no portion of it is delivered, but under a strict account; that all of it is entered, as it passes, in the divine register; and therefore, that the stewards of such a talent are to expect a future reckoning? Behold! the very heavens are bidden to be the *accomptants* of our years and months and days. O! may this induce us to manage them with a vigilant frugality; to part with them, as

misers with their *hoarded treasures*, warily and circumspectly; and, if possible, as merchants with their *rich commodities*, not without an equivalent, either in personal improvement or social usefulness?

How bright the starry diamonds shine! The ambition of eastern monarchs could imagine no distinction more noble and sublime than that of being likened to those beaming orbs. They form night's *richest dress;* and sparkle upon her sable robe, like jewels of the finest lustre. Like jewels! I wrong their character: the lucid stone has no brilliancy; quenched is the flame even of the golden topaz, compared with those glowing decorations of heaven. How widely are their radiant honours *diffused!* No nation so remote, but sees their beauty and rejoices in their usefulness. They have been admired by all preceding generations, and every rising age will gaze on their charms with renewed delight. How animating, then, is that promise made to the faithful ministers of the Gospel! "They that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." Is not this a most winning encouragement," to spend and be spent" in the service of souls? Methinks, the stars beckon, as they twinkle. Methinks, they show me their splendours, on purpose to inspire me with alacrity in the race set before me; on purpose to enliven my activity in the work that is given me to do. Yes; ye majestic monitors, I understand your meaning. If honour has any charms: if true glory, the glory which cometh from God, is any attractive; you display the most powerful incitements to exercise all assiduity in my holy vocation. I will henceforth observe your intimation; and, when zeal becomes languid, have recourse to your heavenly lamps, if so be I may rekindle its ardour at those inextinguishable fires.

Of the *Polar* star it is observable, that while other luminaries alter their situation, this seems invariably *fixed*. While other luminaries now mount the battlements of heaven, and appear upon duty; now retire beneath the horizon, and resign to a fresh set the watches of the night; this never departs from its station. This, in every season, maintains an uniform position; and is always to be found in the same tract of the northern sky. How often has this beamed bright intelligence on the *sailor*, and conducted the keel to its desired haven! In early ages, those who went down to the sea in ships, and occupied their business in great waters, had scarce any other sure guide for their wandering vessel. This, therefore, they viewed with the most solicitous attention: by this they formed their observations, and regulated their voyage. When this was obscured by clouds, or enveloped in mists, the trembling mariner was bewildered on the watery waste; his thoughts fluctuated as much as the floating surge, and he knew not where he was advanced, or whither he should steer. But, when this auspicious star broke through the gloom, it dissipated the anxiety of his mind and cleared up his dubious passage: he re-assumed, with alacrity the management of the helm, and was able to shape his course with some tolerable degree of satisfaction and certainty.

Such, only much clearer in its light, and much surer in its direction, is the *Holy Word* of God to those myriads of intellectual beings, who are bound for the eternal shores; who, embarked in a vessel of feeble flesh, are to pass the waves of this tempestuous and perilous world. In all difficulties, those sacred pages shed an encouraging ray; in all uncertainties, they suggest the right determination,

and point out the proper procedure. What is still a more inestimable advantage, they, like the star which conducted the Eastern sages, make plain the way of access to a *Redeemer;* they display his unspeakable merits; they discover the method of being interested in his great atonement; and lead the weary soul, tossed by troubles, and shattered by temptations, to that only harbour of peaceful repose. Let us, therefore, attend to this unerring directory, with the same constancy of regard as the seafaring man observes his compass. Let us become as thoroughly acquainted with this sacred chart, as the pilot is with every trusty mark that gives notice of a lurking rock, and with every opening road that yields a safe passage into the port. Above all, let us commit ourselves to this infallible guidance with the same implicit resignation; let us conform our conduct to its exalted precepts with the same sedulous care as the children of Israel, when sojourning in the trackless desart, followed the pillar of fire, and the motion of the miraculous cloud. So it will introduce us, not into an earthly Canaan flowing with milk and honey, but into an immortal Paradise, where is fulness of joy, and where are pleasures for evermore. It will introduce us into those happy, happy regions, where *our sun shall no more go down, nor our moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be our everlasting light, and the days of our mourning*, together with the fatigues of our pilgrimage, *shall be ended.*

I perceive a great variety in the size and splendour of those gems of heaven. Some are of the first magnitude; others of an inferior order. Some glow with intense flames, others glimmer with fainter beams. Yet all are beautiful; all have their peculiar lustre, and distinct use; all tend, in their

different degrees, to enamel the cope of heaven, and embroider the robe of night. This circumstance is remarked by an author, whose sentiments are a source of wisdom, and the very standard of truth. "One star," says the apostle to the Gentiles, "differeth from another star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead."

In the world above, are various degrees of happiness, various seats of honour. Some will rise to more illustrious distinctions and richer joys; some, like vessels of ample capacity, will admit more copious accessions of light and excellence. Yet there will be no want, no deficiency, in any; but a fulness both of divine satisfactions, and personal perfections. *Each* will enjoy *all* the good, and be adorned with *all* the glory, that his heart can wish, or his condition receive. None will know what it is to envy. Not the least malevolence, nor the least selfishness, but everlasting friendship prevails, and a mutual complacency in each other's delight. Love, cordial love, will give every particular saint a participation of all the fruitions which are diffused through the whole assembly of the blessed. No one *eclipses*, but each *reflects light* upon his brother. A sweet interchange of rays subsists, all enlightened by the great fountain, and all enlightening one another; by which reciprocal communication of pleasure and amity, each will be continually *receiving from*, each incessantly *adding to*, the general felicity.

Happy, supremely happy they who are admitted into the celestial mansions. Better to be a doorkeeper in those "ivory palaces," than to fill the most gorgeous throne on earth. The very lowest place at God's right hand, is distinguished honour and consummate bliss. O! that we may, in some

measure, anticipate that beatific state while we remain in our banishment below! May we, *by rejoicing* in the superior prosperity of another, make it *our own!* and, provided the general result is harmony, be content, be pleased, with whatsoever part is assigned to our share, in the universal choir of affairs.

While I am considering the heavenly bodies, I must not entirely forget those fundamental laws of our modern astronomy, *projection* and *attraction;* one of which is the all-combining cement, the other is the ever-operating spring of the mighty frame. In the beginning, the all-creating *fiat* impressed a proper degree of motion on each of those whirling orbs; which if not controlled, would have carried them on in straight lines, and to endless lengths, till they were even lost in the abyss of space; but the *gravitating* property being added to the *projectile* force, determined their courses to a *circular* form; and obliged the reluctant rovers to perform their destined rounds. Were either of those causes to suspend their action, all the harmoniously moving spheres would be disconcerted, would degenerate into sluggish inactive masses, and, falling into the central fire, be burnt to ashes; or else, would exorbitate into wild confusion, and each by the rapidity of its whirl, be dissipated into atoms. But the impulsive and attractive energy, being most nicely attempered to each other, and, under the immediate operation of the Almighty, exerting themselves in perpetual concert, the various globes run their radiant races without the least interruption, or the least deviation; so as to create the alternate changes of day and night, and distribute the useful vicissitudes of succeeding seasons; so as to answer all the great ends of a gracious Providence,

and procure every comfortable convenience for universal nature.

Does not this constitution of the material, very naturally lead the thoughts to those grand principles of the moral and devotional world, faith and love? These are often celebrated by the inspired apostle, as a comprehensive summary of the Gospel. These inspirit the breast, and regulate the progress of each private Christian. These unite the whole congregation of the faithful to God and one another: to God, the great centre in the bonds of gratitude and devotion; to one another, by a reciprocal intercourse of brotherly affections and friendly offices. If you ask, why it is impossible for the true believer to live at all adventures, to *stagnate* in sloth, or habitually to *deviate* from duty? we answer, it is owing to "his faith working by love." He assuredly trusts that Christ has sustained the infamy, and endured the torment due to his sins. He firmly relies on that divine propitiation for the pardon of all his guilt, and humbly expects everlasting salvation as the purchase of his Saviour's merits. This produces such a spirit of gratitude, as refines his inclinations, and animates his whole behaviour. He cannot, he cannot run to excess of riot, because love to his adorable Redeemer, like a strong but silken *curb*, sweetly restrains him; he cannot, he cannot lie lulled in a lethargic indolence, because love to the same infinite Benefactor, like a pungent but endearing *spur*, pleasingly excites him. In a word, faith supplies the powerful impulse, while love gives the determining bias, and leads the willing feet through the whole circle of God's commandments. By the united efficacy of these *heavenly graces*, the Christian conduct is preserved in the uniformity and

beauty of holiness, as by the blended power of those Newtonian principles, the solar system revolves in a steady and magnificent regularity.

How admirable, how extensive, how diversified, is the force of this single principle, *attraction!* This penetrates the very essence of all bodies, and diffuses itself to the remotest limits of the mundane system. By this, the worlds impressed with motion, hang self-balanced on their centres; and though orbs of immense magnitude, require nothing but this amazing property for their support. To this we ascribe a phenomenon of a very different kind, the pressure of the atmosphere; which, though a yielding and expansive fluid, yet, constipated by an attractive energy, surrounds the whole globe, and encloses every creature as it were with a tight bandage; an expedient this, absolutely necessary to preserve the texture of our bodies, and indeed to maintain every species of animal existence. Attraction! Urged by this wonderful impetus, the rivers circulate, copious and unintermitted, among all the nations of the earth; sweeping with rapidity down the steeps, or softly ebbing through the plains. Impelled by the same mysterious force, the nutritious juices are detached from the soil, and ascending the trees, find their way through millions of the finest meanders, in order to transfuse vegetative life into all the branches. This confines the ocean within proper bounds, though the waves thereof roar, though they toss themselves with all the madness of indignant rage; yet, checked by this potent, this inevitable curb, they are unable to pass even the slightest barrier of sand. To this the mountains owe that unshaken firmness which laughs at the shock of careering winds, and bids the tempest, with all its mingled

horrors, impotently rave; by virtue of this invisible mechanism, without the aid of crane or pulley, or any instrument of human device, many thousand tons of water are raised every moment into the regions of the firmament; by this they continue suspended in thin air, without any capacious cistern to contain their substance, or any massy pillars to sustain their weight: by this same variously acting power, they return to the place of their native residence, distilled in gentle falls of dew, or precipitated in impetuous showers of rain: they slide into the fields in fleecy flights of snow, or are darted upon the houses in clattering storms of hail: this occasions the strong cohesion of solid bodies: without which our large machines could exert themselves with no vigour, and the nicer utensils of life would elude our expectations of service; this affords a foundation for all those delicate or noble mechanic arts, which furnish mankind with numberless conveniences both of ornament and delight: in short, this is the prodigious ballast, which composes the equilibrium, and constitutes the stability of things; this is the great chain which forms the connexions of universal nature; and the mighty engine which prompts, facilitates, and, in good measure, accomplishes all her operations. What *complicated* effects from a *single* cause! What profusion amidst frugality! an unknown profusion of benefits with the utmost frugality of expense!

And what *is* this attraction? Is it a quality in its existence, inseparable from matter; and, in its acting, independent on the Deity? Quite the reverse: it is the very finger of God; the constant impression of divine power; a principle neither innate in matter, nor intelligible by mortals. Does it not, however, bear a considerable analogy to the

agency of the Holy Ghost in the Christian economy? Are not the gracious operations of the blessed Spirit thus *extensive*, thus *admirable*, thus *various?* That Almighty Being transmits his gifts through every age, and communicates his graces to every adherent on the Redeemer; all, either of illustrious memory, or of beneficial tendency; in a word, "all the good that is done upon earth, he doth it himself." Strong in his aid, and in the power of his might, the saints of all times have trod vice under their feet, have triumphed over this abject world, and conversed in heaven while they dwelt on earth. *Not I, but the grace of God which was with me*, is the unanimous acknowledgment of them all. By the same kindly succours, the whole church is still enlightened, quickened, and governed. Through his benign influences, the scales of *ignorance* fall from the understanding, the leprosy of *evil* concupiscence is purged from the will, and the fetters, the more than adamantine fetters of *habitual* inquity, drop off from the conversation. He breathes even upon dry bones, and they live; they are animated with faith, they pant with ardent and heavenly desire, they exercise themselves in all the duties of godliness. His real, though secret inspiration, dissolves the flint in the impenitent breast, and binds up the sorrows of the broken heart; raises the thoughts high in the elevations of holy hope, yet lays them low in the humiliations of inward abasement; steels the soul with impenetrable resolutions and persevering fortitude, at the same time softens it into a dove-like meekness, and melts it in penitential sorrow.

When I contemplate those ample and magnificent structures, erected over all the æthereal plains; when I look upon them as so many splendid repos-

itories of light, or fruitful abodes of life; when I remember that there may be other orbs, vastly more remote than those which appear to our unaided sight; orbs, whose effulgence, though travelling ever since the creation, is not yet ar rived upon our coasts; when I stretch my thoughts to the innumerable orders of being which inhabit all those spacious systems, from the *loftiest seraph* to the lowest reptile; from the armies of angels which surround the throne of Jehovah, to the *puny nations* which tinge with blue the surface of the plum, or mantle the standing pool with green:—how various appear the links in this immense chain! how vast the gradations in this universal scale of existence! Yet all these, though ever so vast and various, are the work of God's hand, and are full of his presence.

He rounded in his palm those dreadfully large globes, which are pendulous in the vault of heaven. He kindled those astonishingly bright fires which fill the firmament with a flood of glory. By him they are suspended in fluid æther, and cannot be shaken; by him they dispense a perpetual tide of beams, and are never exhausted. He formed, with inexpressible nicety, that delicately fine collection of tubes, that unknown multiplicity of subtle springs; which organize and actuate the frame of the minutest insect; he bids the crimson current roll, the vital movements play, and associates a world of wonders, even in an animated point. In all these is a signal exhibition of creating power; to all these are extended the special regards of preserving goodness. From hence, let me learn to rely on the providence, and to revere the presence, of the Supreme Majesty.

To rely on his providence.—For amidst that

inconceivable number and variety of beings which swarm through the regions of creation, not one is overlooked, not one is neglected, by the great omnipotent Cause of all. However inconsiderable in its character, or diminutive in its size, it is still the production of the universal Maker, and belongs to the family of the Almighty Father. What though enthroned archangels enjoy the smiles of his countenance! Yet the low inhabitants of earth, the most despicable worms of the ground, are not excluded from his providential care. Though the manifestations of his perfections is vouchsafed to holy and intellectual essences, his ear is open to the cries of the young raven; his eye is attentive to the wants, and to the welfare of the very meanest births of nature. How much less then are his own people disregarded; those for whom he has delivered his beloved Son to death, and for whom he has prepared habitations of eternal joy! They disregarded! No; they are "kept as the apple of an eye;" the very hairs of their head are all numbered. The fondest mother may forget the infant that is "dandled on her knees," and sucks at her breasts, much sooner than the Father of everlasting compassions can discontinue, or remit his watchful tenderness to his people, his children, his heirs.

Let this teach me also a more lively sense of the divine presence. All the rolling worlds above, all the living atoms below, together with all the beings that intervene betwixt these wide extremes, are vouchers for an ever-present Deity. "God has not left himself without witness:" the marks of his footsteps are evident in every place, and the touches of his finger distinguishable in every creature. "Thy name is so high, O thou all-supporting, all-informing Lord, and that do thy wondrous works declare.

Thy goodness warms in the morning sun, and refreshes in the evening breeze; thy glory shines in the lamps of midnight, and smiles in the blossoms of spring. We see a trace of thy incomprehensible grandeur of the boundless extent of things; and a sketch of thy exquisite skill in those almost evanescent sparks of life, the insect race." How stupid is this heart of mine, that, amidst such a multitude of remembrancers, thronging on every side, I should forget thee a single moment! Grant me, thou great *I am*, thou source and support of universal existence!—O! grant me an enlightened eye, to discern thee in every object, and a devout heart, to adore thee on every occasion. Instead of living without God in the world, may I be ever with him, and see all things full of him!

———The glitt'ring stars,
By the deep ear of meditation heard,
Still in their midnight watches sing of him.
He nods a calm. The tempest blows his wrath:
The thunder is his voice; and the red flash,
His speedy sword of justice. At his touch
The mountains flame. He shakes the solid earth,
And rocks the nations. Nor in these alone,
In *ev'ry common instance* God is seen.

THOMSON'S *Spring*.

If the beautiful spangles, which a clear night pours on the beholder's eye; if those other fires, which beam in remoter skies, and are discoverable only by that revelation to the sight, the telescope; if all those *bright millions* are so many fountains of day, enriched with native and independent lustre, illuminating planets, and enlivening sytems of their own; what pomp, how majestic and splendid, is disclosed in the midnight scene! What riches are disseminated through all those numberless provin-

ces of the great Jehovah's empire! Grandeur beyond expression! Yet, there is not the meanest slave, but carries greater wealth in his own bosom, possesses superior dignity in his own person. The soul, that informs his clay; the soul, that teaches him to think, and enables him to choose; that qualifies him to relish rational pleasure, and to breathe sublime desire; the soul, that is endowed with such noble faculties; and, above all, is distinguished with the dreadful, the glorious capacity, of being pained or blessed for ever; this soul surpasses in worth whatever the eye can see; whatever of material the fancy can imagine. Before one such intellectual being, all the treasure and all the magnificence of unintelligent creation, becomes poor and contemptible. For this soul, Omnipotence itself has waked and worked through every age. To convince this soul, the fundamental laws of nature have been controlled, and the most amazing miracles have alarmed all the ends of the earth. To instruct this soul, the wisdom of heaven has been transfused into the sacred page, and missionaries have been sent from the Great King, who resides in light unapproachable. To *sanctify* this soul, the Almighty Comforter takes the wings of a dove; and with a sweet transforming influence, broods on the human heart. And O! to *redeem* this soul from guilt; to rescue it from hell; the heaven of heavens was bowed, and God himself came down to dwell in dust.

Let me pause a while upon this important subject. What are the schemes which engage the attention of eminent statesmen and mighty monarchs, compared with the grand interests of an immortal soul! The support of commerce, and the success of armies, though extremely weighty affairs; yet

if laid in the balance against the salvation of a soul, are lighter than the downy feather, poised against talents of gold. To save a navy from *shipwreck*, or a kingdom from *slavery*, are deliverances of the most momentous nature which the transactions of mortality can admit. But O! how they shrink into an inconsiderable trifle, if (their aspect upon immortality forgot) they are set in competition with the delivery of a single soul, from the anguish and horrors of a *distressed eternity!*

Is such the importance of the soul? What vigilance then can be too much; or rather what holy solicitude can be sufficient for the overseers of the Saviour's flock, and the guardians of this great, this venerable, this invaluable charge? Since such is the importance of the soul, wilt thou not, O man, be watchful for the preservation of thy own? Shall every casual incident awaken thy concern; every transitory toy command thy regard; and shall the welfare of thy soul, a work of continual occurrence, a work of endless consequence, sue in vain, for thy serious care? Thy soul, thy soul, is thy all. If this be secured, thou art greatly rich, and wilt be unspeakably happy. If this be lost, a whole world acquired will leave thee in poverty; and all its delights enjoyed, will abandon thee to misery.

I have often been charmed, and awed, at the sight of the nocturnal heavens; even before I knew how to consider them in their proper circumstance of majesty and beauty. Something, like magic, has struck my mind, on a transient and unthinking survey of the ætherial vault; tinged throughout with the purest azure, and decorated with innumerable starry lamps. I have felt, I know not what, a powerful and aggrandizing impulse, which seemed to snatch me from the low entanglements of vanity,

and prompted an ardent sigh for sublimer objects. Methought I heard, even from the silent spheres, a commanding call, to spurn the abject earth, and pant after unseen delights. Henceforward, I hope to imbibe more copiously this moral emanation of the skies; when, in some such manner as the preceding, they are rationally seen, and the sight is duly improved. The stars, I trust, will teach as well as shine; and help to dispel, both nature's gloom, and my intellectual darkness. To some people, they discharge no better a service than that of holding a flambeau to their feet, and softening the horrors of their night. To me and my friends, may they act as ministers of a superior order; as counsellors of wisdom, and guides to happiness? Nor will they fail to execute this noble office, if they gently light our way into the knowledge of their adored Maker; if they point out, with their silver rays, our path to his beatific presence.

I gaze, I ponder. I ponder, I gaze; and think ineffable things. I roll an eye of awe and admiration. Again and again I repeat my ravished views, and can never satiate either my curiosity or my inquiry. I spring my thoughts into this immense field, till even fancy tires upon her wing; I find wonders, *ever new;* wonders more and more amazing. Yet, after all my present inquiries, what a mere nothing do I know; by all my future searches, how little shall I be able to learn of those vastly distant suns, and their circling retinue of worlds! Could I pry with Newton's piercing sagacity, or launch into his extensive surveys; even then, my apprehensions would be little better than those dim and scanty images, which the mole, just emerged from her cavern, receives on her feeble optic.—This, sure, should repress all impatient or immod-

erate ardour to pry into the secrets of the starry structures, and make me more particularly careful to cultivate my heart. To fathom the depths of the Divine Essence; or to scan universal nature, with a critical exactness, is an attempt, which sets the acutest philosopher very nearly on a level with the idiot; since it is almost, if not altogether, as impracticable by the former, as by the latter.

Be it, then, my chief study, not to pursue what is absolutely unattainable; but rather to seek what is obvious to find, easy to be acquired, and of inestimable advantage when possessed. O! let me seek that charity, which edifieth; that faith, which purifieth. Love, humble love, not conceited science, keeps the door of heaven. Faith, a child-like faith in Jesus; not the haughty self-sufficient spirit, which scorns to be ignorant of any thing; presents a key to those abodes of bliss. This present state is the scene destined to the exercise of devotion; the invisible world is the place appointed for the enjoyment of knowledge. There, the dawn of our infantile minds will be advanced to the maturity of perfect day; or rather, there our midnight shades will be brightened into all the lustre of noon. There, the souls which come from the school of faith, and bring with them the principles of love, will dwell in light itself; will be obscured with no darkness at all; will know, even as they are known. Such an acquaintance, therefore, do I desire to form, and to carry on such a correspondence with the heavenly bodies, as may shed a benign influence on the seeds of grace implanted in my breast. Let the exalted tracks of the firmament sink my soul into deep humiliation; let those eternal fires kindle in my heart an adoring gratitude to their Almighty Soveregin; let yonder pon-

derous and enormous globes, which rest on his supporting arm, teach me an unshaken affiance in their incarnate Maker. Then shall I be—if not wise as the astronomical adept, yet wise unto salvation.

Having now walked and worshipped in this universal temple, that is arched with skies, emblazed with stars, and extended even to immensity; having cast an eye, like the enraptured patriarch, an eye of reason and devotion, through the magnificent scene; with the former, having discovered an infinitude of worlds; and with the latter, having met the Deity in every view; having beheld, as Moses in the flaming bush, a glimpse of Jehovah's excellencies, reflected from the several planets, and streaming from myriads of celestial luminaries; having read various lessons in that stupendous Book of Wisdom, where unmeasurable sheets of azure compose the page, and orbs of radiance write, in everlasting characters a comment on our creed—what remains, but that I close the midnight solemnity, as our Lord concluded his grand sacramental institution, with a song of praise? And behold a hymn, suited to the sublime occasion, indited by inspiration itself, transferred into our language by one of the happiest efforts of human ingenuity.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ætherial sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim:
Th' unwearied sun from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display;
And publishes to every land,
The work of an Almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wond'rous tale
And nightly, to the list'ning earth,
Repeats the story of her birth:

While all the stars, that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

" What, though in solemn silence, all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What, though nor real voice, nor sound
Amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
For ever singing as they shine,
The hand that made us is divine.

A WINTER-PIECE.

A

WINTER-PIECE.

'Tis true, in the delightful seasons, his tender ness and his love are most eminently displayed. In the vernal months, all is beauty to the eye, and music to the ear. The clouds drop fatness: the air softens into balm; and flowers, in rich abundance, spring wherever we tread, bloom wherever we look. Amidst the burning heats of summer, he expands the leaves, and thickens the shades. He spreads the cooling arbour to receive us, and awakes the gentle breeze to fan us; the moss swells into a couch for the repose of our bodies, while the rivulet softly rolls, and sweetly murmurs to soothe our imagination. In autumn, his bounty covers the fields with a profusion of nutrimental treasure, and bends the boughs with loads of delicious fruit; he furnishes his hospitable board with present plenty, and prepares a copious magazine for future wants. But is it only in these smiling periods of the year, that God, the all-gracious God, is seen? Has winter, stern winter, no tokens of his presence? Yes; all things are eloquent of his praise. "His way is in the whirlwind." Storms and tempests fulfil his

word, and extol his power. Even piercing frosts bear witness to his goodness, while they bid the shivering nations tremble at his wrath. Be winter then, for a while, our theme. Perhaps, those barren scenes may be fruitful of intellectual improvement. Perhaps, that rigorous cold, which binds the earth in icy chains, may serve to enlarge our hearts, and warm them with holy love.

See! how the day is shortened! The sun, detained in fairer climes, or engaged in more agreeable services, rises, like an unwilling visitant, with tardy and reluctant steps. He walks, with a shy indifference, along the edges of the southern sky; casting an oblique glance, he just looks upon our dejected world, and scarcely scatters light through the thick air. Dim is his appearance, languid are his gleams, while he continues. Or, if he chance to wear a brighter aspect, and a cloudless brow; yet, like the young and gay in the house of mourning, he seems uneasy till he is gone; is in haste to depart. And let him depart. Why should we wish for his longer stay, since he can show us nothing but the creation in distress? The flowery families lie dead, and the tuneful tribes are struck dumb. The trees, stripped of their verdure, and lashed by storms, spread their naked arms to the enraged and relentless heavens. Fragrance no longer floats in the air; but chilling damps hover, or cutting gales blow. Nature, divested of all her beautiful robes, sits, like a forlorn, disconsolate widow, in her weeds; while winds in doleful accents howl, and rains in repeated showers weep.

We regret not, therefore, the speedy departure of the day. When the room is hung with funeral black, and dismal objects are all around, who would desire to have the *glimmering taper* kept alive;

which can only discover spectacles of sorrow, can only make the horror visible? And, since this mortal life is little better than a continual conflict with sin, or an unremitted struggle with misery; is it not a gracious ordination which has reduced our age to a span? Fourscore years of trial for the virtuous are sufficiently long; and more than such a term, allowed to the wicked, would render them beyond all measure vile. Our way to the kingdom of heaven lies through tribulations.—Shall we then accuse, shall we not rather bless, the Providence which has made the passage short? Soon, soon we cross the vale of tears, and then arrive on the happy hills, where light for ever shines, where joy for ever smiles.

Sometimes the day is rendered shorter still, is almost blotted out from the year. The vapours gather, they thicken into an impenetrable gloom, and obscure the face of the sky. At length, the rains descend, the sluices of the firmament are opened, and the low-hung clouds, pour the congregated stores. Copious and unintermitted, still they pour, and still are unexhausted. The waters drop incessantly from the eaves, and rush in rapid streams from the spouts. They roar along the channelled pavements, and stand in foul shallows amidst the village streets. Now, if the inattentive eye, or negligent hand has left the roof but scantily covered, the insinuating element finds its way into every flaw, and, oozing through the ceiling, at once upbraids and chastises the careless inhabitant. The ploughman, soaked to the skin, leaves his half-tilled acre. The poor poultry, dripping with wet, crowd into shelter. The tenants of the bough fold up their wings, afraid to launch into the streaming air. The beasts, joyless and dispirited, ruminate under

their sheds. The roads swim, and the brooks swell. The river, amidst all this watery ferment, long contained itself within its appointed bounds; but, swollen by innumerable currents, and roused at last, into uncontrollable rage, bursts over its banks, shoots into the plain, bears down all opposition, spreads itself far and wide, and buries the meadow under a brown, sluggish, soaking *deluge.*

How happy for man, that this inundation comes, when there are no flowery crops in the valley to be overwhelmed; no fields standing thick with corn to be laid waste! At *such* a juncture, it would have been *ruin* to the husbandman and his family; but, *thus* timed, it yields *manure* for his ground, and promises him *riches* in reversion. How often, and how long, has the Divine Majesty borne with the most injurious affronts from sinners! His goodness triumphed over their perverseness, and graciously refused to be exasperated. But, O presumptuous creatures, multiply no longer your provocations. Urge not, by repeated iniquities, the Almighty arm to strike; lest his long-suffering cease, and his fierce anger break forth; break forth, like a flood of waters, and sweep you away into irrecoverable and everlasting perdition.

How mighty! how majestic! and O! how mysterious, are thy works, thou God of heaven and Lord of nature! When the air is calm, where sleep the *stormy winds?* In what chambers are they reposed, or in what dungeons confined; till thou art pleased to awaken their rage, and throw open their prison doors? Then, with irresistible impetuosity they fly forth, scattering dread, and menacing destruction.

The atmosphere is hurled in the most tumultuous confusion. The ærial torrent bursts its way

over mountains, seas, and continents. All things feel the dreadful shock. All things tremble before the furious blast. The forest, vexed and torn, groans under the scourge. Her sturdy sons are strained to the very root, and almost sweep the soil they were wont to shade. The stubborn oak, that disdains to bend, is dashed headlong to the ground; and, with shattered arms, with prostrate trunk, blocks the road; while the flexile reed, that springs up in the marsh, yielding to the gust, (as the *meek* and pliant temper to injuries, or the *resigned* and patient spirit to misfortunes,) eludes the force of the storm, and survives amidst the wide spread havoc.

For a moment, the turbulent and outrageous sky seems to be assuaged; but it intermits its wrath, only to increase its strength. Soon the sounding squadrons of the air return to the attack, and renew their ravages with redoubled fury. The stately dome rocks amidst the wheeling clouds. The impregnable tower totters on its basis; and threatens to overwhelm, whom it was intended to protect. The ragged rock is rent in pieces; and even the hills, the perpetual hills, on their deep foundations, are scarcely secure. Where, now, is the place of safety, when the *city* reels, and houses become heaps? Sleep affrighted flies. Diversion is turned into horror. All is uproar in the element; all is consternation among mortals; and nothing but one wide scene of rueful devastation through the land. Yet, this is only an *inferior* minister of divine displeasure; the executioner of *milder* indignation. How then, O! *how will the lofty looks of man be humbled, and the haughtiness of men be bowed down;* when the Lord God Omnipotent shall meditate terror—when he shall set all his terrors in array—

when he arises, to judge the nations, and to shake terribly the earth!

The ocean swells with tremendous commotions. The ponderous waves are heaved from their capacious bed, and almost lay bare the unfathomable deep. Flung into the most rapid agitation, they sweep over the rocks; they lash the lofty cliffs; and toss themselves into the clouds. Navies are rent from their anchors; and, with all their enormous load, are whirled, swift as the arrow, wild as the winds, along the vast abyss. Now they climb the rolling mountain; they plough the frightful ridge, and seem to skim the skies. Anon, they plunge into the opening gulf; they lose the sight of day; and are lost themselves to every eye. How vain is the pilot's art! how impotent the mariner's strength! They reel to and fro, and stagger in the jarring hold; or cling to the cordage, while burstings seas foam over the deck. Despair is in every face, and death sits threatening on every surge. But why, O ye astonished mariners, why should you abandon yourselves to despair? Is the Lord's hand shortened, because the waves of the sea rage horribly? Is his ear deafened by the roaring thunders and the bellowing tempest? Cry, cry unto him, who "holdeth the winds in his fist, and the waters in the hollow of his hand." He is all gracious to hear, and almighty to save. If he command, the storm shall be hushed to silence; the billows shall subside into a calm; the lightnings shall lay their fiery bolts aside; and, instead of sinking in a watery grave, you shall find yourselves brought to the desired haven.

Sometimes, after a joyless day, a more dismal night succeeds. The lazy, lowering vapours had wove so thick a veil, as the meridian sun could

scarcely penetrate. What gloom then must overwhelm the nocturnal hours! The moon withdraws her shining. Not a single star is able to struggle through the deep arrangement of shades. All is *pitchy darkness*, without one enlivening ray. How solemn! how awful! 'Tis like the shroud of nature, or the return of chaos. I don't wonder that it is the parent of terrors, and so apt to engender melancholy. Lately, the tempest marked its rapid way with mischief; now the night dresses her silent pavillion with horror.

I have sometimes left the beaming tapers, withdrawn from the ruddy fire, and plunged into the thickest of these sooty shades, without regretting the change, rather exulting in it as a welcome deliverance. The very gloom was pleasing, was exhilarating, compared with the conversation I quitted. The speech of my companions (how does it grieve me, that I should even once have occasion to call them by that name!) was the language of darkness; was horror to the soul, and torture to the ear. *Their teeth were spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword*, to stab and assassinate their neighbours' character. *Their throat was an open sepulchre*, gaping to devour the reputation of the innocent, or tainting the air with their virulent and polluted breath. Sometimes, their licentious and ungovernable discourse shot arrows of profaneness against heaven itself; and, in proud defiance, challenged the resentment of Omnipotence. Sometimes, as if it was the glory of human nature to cherish the grossest appetites of the brute, or the mark of a gentlemen to have served an apprenticeship in a brothel; the filthiest jests of the stews (if low obscenity can be a jest) were nauseously obtruded on the company. All the modest part were of-

fended and grieved; while the other besotted creatures laughed aloud, though the leprosy of uncleanness appeared on their lips. Are not these persons prisoners of darkness; though blazing sconces pour artificial day through their rooms? Are not their souls immured in the most baleful shades; though the noontide sun is brightened, by flaming on their gilded chariots? They discern not that great and adorable Being, who fills the universe with his infinite and glorious presence; who is *all eye* to observe their actions, *all ear* to examine their words. They know not the all-sufficient Redeemer, nor the unspeakable blessedness of his heavenly kingdom. They are groping for the prize of happiness, but will certainly grasp the thorn of anxiety. They are wantonly sporting on the brink of a precipice; and are every moment in danger of falling headlong into irretrievable ruin, and endless despair.

They have forced me out, and are, perhaps, deriding me in my absence; are charging my reverence for the ever-present-God, and my concern for the dignity of our rational nature, to the account of humour and singularity, to narrowness of thought, or sourness of temper. Be it so. I will indulge no indignation against them. If any thing like it should arise, I will convert it into prayer—"Pity them, O thou Father of Mercies!—Show them the madness of their profaneness! Show them the baseness of their vile ribaldry! Let their dissolute rant be turned into silent sorrow and confusion; till they open their lips to adore thine insulted majesty, and to implore thy gracious pardon; till they devote to thy service, those social hours, and those superior faculties, which they are now abusing—to the dishonour of thy name—to the contamination of their own

souls—and (unless timely repentance intervene) to their everlasting infamy and perdition."

I ride home amidst the gloomy void. All darkling and solitary, I can scarce discern my horse's head; and only guess out my blind road. No companion but danger, or perhaps "destruction ready at my side." But why do I fancy myself solitary? Is not the Father of Lights, the God of my life, the great and everlasting Friend, always at my right hand? Because the day is excluded, is his Omnipresence vacated? Though I have no earthly acquaintance near, to assist in case of a misfortune; or to beguile the time, and divert uneasy suspicions, by entertaining conferences; may I not lay my help upon the Almighty, and converse with God by humble supplication? For this exercise, no place is improper, no hour unseasonable, and no posture incommodious. This is society, the best of society, even in solitude. This is a fund of delights easily portable, and quite inexhaustible; a treasure this, of unknown value; liable to no hazard from wrong or robbery; but perfectly secure to the lonely wanderer in the most darksome paths.

And why should I distress myself with apprehensions of peril? This access to God is not only an indefeasible privilege, but a kind of *ambulatory garrison*. Those who make known their requests unto God, and rely upon his protecting care, he gives his angels charge over their welfare. His angels are commissioned to escort them in their travelling, and to hold up their goings, that they dash not their foot against a stone. Nay, *he himself* condescends to be their guardian, and "keeps all their bones, so that not one of them is broken." Between these persons and the most mischievous objects, a treaty of peace is concluded. The articles

of this grand alliance are recorded in the book of revelation; and will, when it is for the real benefit of believers, assuredly be made good in the administration of providence. *In that day*, saith the Lord, *will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground;* and they *shall be in league with the stones of the field.* Though they fall headlong on the flints, even the flints, fitted to fracture the scull, shall receive them as into the arms of friendship, and not offer to hurt whom the Lord is pleased to preserve.

May I then enjoy the presence of this gracious God, and darkness and light shall be both alike. Let him whisper peace to my conscience; and this dread silence shall be more charming than the voice of eloquence, or the strains of music. Let him reveal his ravishing perfections in my soul; and I shall not want the saffron beauties of the morn, the golden glories of noon, or the impurpled evening sky. I shall sigh only for those most desirable and distinguished realms, where the light of his countenance *perpetually* shines; and consequently, "there is no night there."

How surprising are the alterations of nature! I left her, the preceding evening, plain and unadorned. But now a thick rime has shed its hoary honours over all. It has shagged the fleeces of the sheep, and crisped the traveller's locks. The hedges are richly fringed, and all the ground is profusely powdered. The downward branches are tasselled with silver, and the upright are feathered with the plumy wave.

The fine are not always the valuable. The air, amidst all these gaudy decorations, is charged with chilling and unwholesome damps. The raw, hazy

influence spreads wide, sits deep, hangs heavy and oppressive on the springs of life. A listless languor clogs the animal functions, and the purple stream glides but faintly through its channels. In vain, the ruler of the day exerts his beaming powers; in vain he attempts to disperse this insurrection of vapours. The sullen, maglignant cloud refuses to depart. It envelopes the world, and intercepts the *prospect*. I look abroad for the neighbouring village; I send my eye in quest of the rising turret; but am scarce able to discern the very next house. Where are the blue arches of heaven? Where is the radiant countenance of the sun? Where the boundless scenes of creation? Lost, lost are their beauties, quenched their glories. The thronged theatre of the universe seems an empty void, and all its elegant pictures an undistinguished blank. Thus would it have been with our intellectual views, if the *Gospel* had not come in, to our relief. We should have known, neither our true good, nor real evil. We had been a riddle to ourselves; the present state all confusion, and the future impenetrable darkness. But the Sun of Righteousness, arising with potent and triumphant beams, has dissipated the interposing cloud, has opened a prospect more beautiful than the blossoms of spring, more cheering than the treasures of autumn, and far more enlarged than the extent of the visible system: which, having led the eye of the mind through fields of grace, over rivers of righteousness, and hills crowned with knowledge, terminates at length in the heavens, sweetly losing itself in regions of infinite bliss and endless glory.

As I walk along the fog, it seems, at some little distance, to be almost solid gloom; such as would shut out every glimpse of light, and totally imprison

me in obscurity. But when I approach, and enter it, I find myself agreeably mistaken, and the mist much thinner than it appeared. Such is the case with regard to the sufferings of the present life: they are not, when experienced, so dreadful as a timorous imagination surmised. Such also is the case with reference to the *gratifications* of *sense:* they prove not, when enjoyed, so substantial as a sanguine expectation represented. In both instances we are graciously disappointed. The keen edge of the calamity is blunted, that it may not wound us with incurable anguish: the exquisite relish of the prosperity is palled, that it may not captivate our affections, and enslave them to inferior delights.

Sometimes, the face of things wears a more pleasing form; the very reverse of the foregoing. The sober evening advances, to close the short lived day. The firmament, clear and unsullied, puts on its brightest blue. The stars, in thronging multitudes, and with a peculiar brilliancy, glitter through the fair expanse; while the frost pours its subtle and penetrating influence all around. Sharp and intensely severe, all the long night the rigid æther continues its operations. When, late and slow, the morning opens her pale eye, in what a curious and amusing disguise is nature dressed! The icicles, jagged and uneven, are pendent on the houses. A whitish film incrusts the windows, where mimic landscapes rise, and fancied figures swell. The fruitful fields are hardened to iron: the moistened meadows are congealed to marble: and both resound (an effect unknown before) with the peasant's hasty tread. The stream is arrested in its career, and its ever-flowing surface chained to the banks. The fluid paths become a solid road:

where the finny shoals were wont to rove, the sportive youth slide, or the rattling chariots roll. And, (what would seem, to an inhabitant of the southern world, as unaccountable as the deepest mysteries of our religion,) that very same breath of heaven, which cements the lakes into a crystal pavement, cleaves the oaks as it were with invisible wedges; "breaks in pieces the northern iron, and the steel, even while it builds a bridge of icy rock over the seas."

The air is all serenity. Refined by the nitrous particles, it affords the most distinct views, and extensive prospects. The seeds of infection are killed, and the pestilence destroyed, even in embryo. So, the cold of affliction tends to mortify our corruptions, and subdue our vicious habits. The crowding atmosphere constringes our bodies, and braces our nerves. The spirits are buoyant, and sally briskly on the execution of their office. In the summer months, such an unclouded sky, and so bright a sun, would have melted us with heat, and softened us into supineness. We should have been ready to throw our limbs under the spreading beech, and to lie at ease by the murmuring brook. But, now, none loiters in his path; none is seen with folded arms. All is in motion; all is activity. Choice, prompted by the weather, supplies the spur of necessity. Thus, the rugged school of misfortune often trains up the mind to a vigorous exertion of its faculties. The bleak climate of adversity often inspirits us with a manly resolution; when a soft and downy affluence, perhaps, would have relaxed all the generous springs of the soul, and have left it enervated with pleasure, or dissolved in indolence.

"Cold cometh out of the north." The winds,

having swept those deserts of snow, arm themselves with millions of frozen particles, and make a fierce descent upon our isle. Under black and scowling clouds, they drive, dreadfully whizzing, through the darkened air: they growl around our houses, assault our doors, and eager for entrance, fasten on our windows. Walls can scarce restrain them, bars are unable to exclude them; through every cranny they force their way. Ice is on their wings; they scatter agues through the land; and winter, all winter rages as they go. Their breath is as a searing iron, to the little verdure left in the plains: vastly more pernicious to the tender plants than the sharpest knife: they kill their branches, and wound the very root. Let not the corn venture to peep too freely from the entrenchment of the furrow; let not the fruit-bearing blossoms dare to come abroad from their lodgement in the bark; lest these murderous blasts, intercept and seize the unwary strangers, and destroy the hopes of the advancing year.

O, 'tis severely cold! Who is so hardy, as not to shrink at this excessively pinching weather? See! every face is pale: even the blooming cheeks contract a gelid hue: and the teeth hardly forbear chattering. Ye that sit easy and joyous amidst your commodious apartments, solacing yourselves in the diffusive warmth of your fire, be mindful of your brethren in the cheerless tenement of poverty. Their shattered panes are open to the piercing winds; a tattered garment scarcely covers their shivering flesh; while a few faint and dying embers on the squalid hearth rather mock their wishes than warm their limbs. While the generous juices of *Oporto* sparkle in your glasses; or the streams, beautifully tinged and deliciously flavoured with the *Chinese* leaf, smoke in the elegant porcelain; O re-

member, that many of your fellow-creatures, amidst all the rigour of these inclement skies, are emaciated with sickness, benumbed with age, and pining with hunger. Let "their loins bless you" for comfortable clothing; restore them with medicine; regale them with food; and baffle the raging year. So may you never know any of their distresses, but only by the hearing of the ear, the seeing of the eye, or the feeling of a tender commiseration! Methinks, the bitter blustering winds plead for the poor indigents. May they breathe pity into your breasts, while they blow hardships into their huts! Observe those blue flames and ruddy coals, in your chimney: quickened by the cold, they look more lively, and glow more strongly: silent but seasonable admonition to the gay circle that chat and smile around them! Thus may your hearts, at such a juncture of need, kindle into a peculiar benevolence! Detain not your superfluous piles of wood: let them hasten to the relief of the starving family. Bid them expire in many a willing blaze to mitigate the severity of the season, and cheer the bleak abodes of want. So shall they ascend, mingled with thanksgivings to God, and ardent prayers for your welfare—ascend, more grateful to Heaven, than columns of the most costly incense.

Now the winds cease. Having brought their load, they are dismissed from service. They have wafted an immense cargo of clouds, which empty themselves in snow. At first, a few scattered shreds come wandering down the saddened sky. This slight skirmish is succeeded by a general onset. The flakes, large and numerous, and thick wavering, descend. They dim the air, and hasten the approach of night. Through all the night, in softest silence, and with a continual flow, this fleecy

shower falls. In the morning, when we awake, what a surprising change appears! Is this the same world? Here is no diversity of colour! I can hardly distinguish the trees from the hills on which they grow. Which are the meadows, and which the plains? Where are the green pastures, and where the fallow lands? All things lie blended in bright confusion; so bright, that it heightens the splendour of day, and even dazzles the organs of sight. The lawn is not so fair as this snowy mantle which invests the fields; and even the lily, was the lily to appear, would look tarnished in its presence. I can think of but one thing which excels or equals the glittering robe of winter. Is any person desirous to know my meaning? He may find it explained in that admirable hymn composed by the royal penitent. Is any desirous to possess this matchless ornament? He will find it offered to his acceptance in every page of the Gospel.

See! (for the eye cannot satisfy itself without viewing again and again the curious, the delicate scene,) see! how the hedges are habited like spotless vestals! The houses are roofed with uniformity and lustre; the meadows are covered with a carpet of the finest ermine; the groves bow beneath the lovely burden; and all, all below, is one wide immense, shining waste of white. By deep snows, and heavy rains, God *sealeth up the hand of every man;* and for this purpose, adds our sacred philosopher, *that all men may know his work.* He cofines them within their doors, and puts a stop to their secular business, that they may consider the things which belong to their spiritual welfare; that, having a vacation from their ordinary employ, they may observe the works of his power, and become acquainted with the mysteries of his grace.

And worthy, worthy of all observation, are the works of the great Creator. They are prodigiously various, and perfectly amazing. How pliant and ductile is nature under his forming hand! At his command, the self-same substance assumes the most different shapes, and is transformed into an endless multiplicity of figures. If he ordains, the water is moulded into hail, and discharged upon the earth like a volley of shot; or it is consolidated into ice, and defends the rivers, "as it were with a breast-plate." At the bare intimation of his will, the very same element is scattered in hoar-frost, like a sprinkling of the most attenuated ashes; or is spread over the surface of the ground, in these couches of swelling and *flaky* down.

The snow, however it may carry the appearance of cold, affords a warm garment for the corn; screens it from nipping frosts, and cherisheth its infant growth. It will abide for a while, to exert a protecting care, and exercise a fostering influence; then, touched by the sun, or thawed by a softening gale, the furry vesture melts into genial moisture, sinks deep into the soil, and saturates its pores with the dissolving nitre; replenishing the glebe with those principles of vegetative life, which will open into the bloom of spring, and ripen into the fruits of autumn. Beautiful emblem this, and comfortable representation of the divine word, both in the successful and advantageous issue of its operation!—*As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be, that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but shall*

accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.

Nature at length puts off her lucid veil. She drops it in a trickling thaw. The loosened snow rolls in sheets from the houses; various openings spot the hills, which, even while we look, become larger and more numerous. The trees rid themselves, by degrees, of the hoary encumbrance; shook from the springing boughs, part falls heavy to the ground, part flies abroad in shining atoms. Our fields and gardens, lately buried beneath the drifted heaps, rise plain and distinct to view. Since we see nature once again has she no verdant traces, no beautiful features left? They are, like real friends, very rare; and therefore the more particularly to be regarded, the more highly to be valued. Here and there the *holly* hangs out her glowing berries; the *laurustinus* spreads her graceful tufts; and both under a covert of unfading foliage. The plain but hardy *ivy* clothes the decrepit, crazy wall; nor shrinks from the friendly office, though the skies frown, and the storm roars. The *laurel*, firm, erect, and bold, expands its leaf of vivid green. In spite of the united, the repeated attacks of wind, and rain, and frost, it preserves an undismayed, lively look, and maintains its post, while withering millions fall around; worthy, by vanquishing the rugged force of winter, worthy to adorn the triumphant conqueror's brow. Nor must I forget the *bay tree*, which scorns to be a mean pensioner on a few transient sunny gleams: or, with a servile obsequiousness, to vary its appearance in conformity to the changing seasons: by such indications of sterling worth and staunch resolution, reading a lecture to the poet's genius, while it weaves the chaplets for his temples. These, and a few other

plants, clad with native verdure, retain their comely aspect in the bleakest climes and in the coldest months.

Such, and so durable, are the accomplishments of a refined understanding, and an amiable temper. The tawdry ornaments of dress, which catch the unthinking vulgar, soon become insiped and despicable: the rubied lip and the rosy cheek fade: even the sparkling wit, as well as the sparkling eye, please but for a moment. But the virtuous mind has charms which survive the decay of every inferior embellishment; charms which add to the fragrancy of the flower, the permanency of the *ever green.*

Such, likewise, is the happiness of the sincerely religious; like a tree, says the inspired moralist, "whose leaf shall not fall." He borrows not his peace from external circumstances; but has a fund within, and is "satisfied from himself." Even though impoverished by calamitous accidents, he is rich in the possession of grace, and richer in the hope of glory. His joys are infinitely superior to, as well as nobly independent on, the transitory glow of sensual delight, or the capricious favours of what the world calls fortune.

If the *snow* composes the light-armed troops of the sky, methinks the *hail* constitutes its heavy artillery. When driven by a vehement wind, with what dreadful impetuosity does that stony shower fall! How it rebounds from the frozen ground, and rattles on the resounding dome! It attenuates the rivers into smoke, or scourges them into foam. It crushes the infant flowers, cuts in pieces the gardener's early plants, and batters the feeble fortifications of his glasses into shivers. It darts into the traveller's face; he turns with haste from the stroke,

or feels on his cheek for the gushing blood. If he would retreat into the house, it follows him even thither; and, like a determined enemy that pushes the pursuit, dashes through the crackling panes. But the fierce attack is quickly over: the clouds have soon spent their shafts, soon unstrung their bow. Happy for the inhabitants of the earth, that a sally so dreadfully furious, should be so remarkably short! What else could endure the shock or escape destruction?

But, behold a bow, of no hostile intention!—a bow, painted in variegated colours on the disburdened cloud. How vast is the extent, how delicate the texture, of that *showery arch!* It compasseth the heavens with a glorious circle, and teaches us to forget the horrors of the storm. Elegant its form, and rich its tincture, but more delightful its sacred significancy. While the violet and the rose blush in its beautiful aspect, the olive-branch smiles in its gracious import. It writes in radiant dyes what the angels sang in harmonious strains, "Peace on earth, and good-will towards men." It is the stamp of insurance for the continuance of seed-time and harvest, for the preservation and security of the visible world; it is the comfortable token of a better state, and a happier kingdom—a kingdom, where sin shall cease, and misery be abolished; where storms shall beat, and winter pierce no more; but holiness, happiness, and joy, like one unbounded spring, for ever, ever bloom.

THE END.